

PERFORMING WOMEN'S SPEECH IN EARLY MODERN DRAMA:
TROUBLING SILENCE, COMPLICATING VOICE

A Dissertation

by

BEVERLY MARSHALL VAN NOTE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2010

Major Subject: English

Performing Women's Speech in Early Modern Drama:

Troubling Silence, Complicating Voice

Copyright 2010 Beverly Marshall Van Note

PERFORMING WOMEN'S SPEECH IN EARLY MODERN DRAMA:
TROUBLING SILENCE, COMPLICATING VOICE

A Dissertation

by

BEVERLY MARSHALL VAN NOTE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Patricia Phillippy
Committee Members,	Margaret J. M. Ezell
	Howard Marchitello
	James M. Rosenheim
Head of Department,	M. Jimmie Killingsworth

August 2010

Major Subject: English

ABSTRACT

Performing Women's Speech in Early Modern Drama: Troubling Silence,
Complicating Voice. (August 2010)

Beverly Marshall Van Note, B.A., University of Texas at San Antonio;

M.A., Abilene Christian University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Patricia Phillippy

This dissertation attempts to fill a void in early modern English drama studies by offering an in-depth, cross-gendered comparative study emphasizing representations of women's discursive agency. Such an examination contributes to the continuing critical discussion regarding the nature and extent of women's potential agency as speakers and writers in the period and also to recent attempts to integrate the few surviving dramas by women into the larger, male-dominated dramatic tradition.

Because statements about the nature of women's speech in the period were overwhelmingly male, I begin by establishing the richness and variety of women's attitudes toward marriage and toward their speech relative to marriage through an examination of their first-person writings. A reassessment of the dominant paradigms of the shrew and the silent woman as presented in male-authored popular drama—including *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Epicene*—follows. Although these stereotypes are not without ambiguity, they nevertheless considerably flatten the contours of the historical patterns discernable in women's lifewriting. As a result, female spectators may have

experienced greater cognitive dissonance in reaction to the portrayals of women by boy actors. In spite of this, however, they may have borrowed freely from the occasional glimpses of newly emergent views of women readily available in the theater for their own everyday performances, as I argue in a discussion of *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and *The Roaring Girl*.

Close, cross-gendered comparison of two sets of similarly-themed plays follows: *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The Tragedy of Mariam*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Love's Victory*. Here my examination reveals that the female writers' critique of prevailing gender norms is more thorough than the male writers' and that the emphasis on female characters' material bodies, particularly their voices, registers the female dramatists' dissatisfaction with the disfiguring representations of women on the male-dominated professional stage.

I end with a discussion of several plays by women—*The Concealed Fancies*, *The Convent of Pleasure*, and *Bell in Campo*—to illustrate the various revisions of marriage offered by each through their emphasis on gendered performance and, further, to suggest the importance of the woman writer's contribution to the continuing dialectic about the nature of women and their speech.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my work to my first grandchild, Anna Joy, who has been preparing silently for her dramatic entrance onto this marvelous stage as I write.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Patricia Phillippy, for her keen insights, her enthusiastic support, and her friendship. She often discerned a clear voice in my work, where at times I did not. I also would like to thank my committee members: Dr. Margaret Ezell, for her persistent challenges to my thinking and her ready encouragement; Dr. Howard Marchitello, for his excellent constructive criticism, beginning with the earliest foul papers (if I may employ a dramatic metaphor) of Chapter IV in his Renaissance Drama class; and Dr. Jim Rosenheim, for his continued support. I have been blessed in my committee, and my work reflects that.

Thanks also go to my friends and colleagues at Texas A&M University and to the English department faculty and staff, especially Dr. Gary Stringer, Dr. Sally Robinson, Dr. Harriette Andreadis, and Dr. Paul Parrish, for their kind assistance and direction. In addition, I am grateful to my colleagues at St. Edward's University for their encouragement, and to my students, past and present, for their inspiration.

Thanks to my children—my daughter, Emily, her husband, Josh, and my son, Jason—for their patience and forgiveness for the many times I was absent or distracted. I offer heartfelt gratitude to my mother, Barbara Lewis, for always listening and to my father, Tom Marshall, for being proud of his daughter, even though he never told me so. Most of all, thank you to my husband, Eric, for not only encouraging me to do this, but for supporting me and believing in me with each new day.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION: A PROLOGUE ON WOMEN, SPEECH, AND DRAMA	1
Theoretical Perspectives	3
Women and Speech: Cultural and Historical Background.....	7
Women and Drama: Theatrical Background.....	12
Overview	16
II THE BRIDE'S MOUTH OPENED: ATTITUDES TOWARD MARITAL SPEECH IN WOMEN'S LIFEWRITING.....	26
Conventions of Women's Lifewriting.....	29
General Attitudes toward Women's Speech	34
Attitudes toward Marriage and Marital Speech	46
The Fluidity of Public and Private in Marital Speech and Writing	63
Women's Letters as Embodied Speech	74
Theater's Influence	82
III SLIPPERY TONGUES: SHREWS AND SILENT WOMEN ON THE EARLY MODERN STAGE.....	101
Shrewishness and Silence.....	104
Reading and Performing the Shrew: <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	111
Dramatic Manipulations of Silence: <i>Epicene</i>	128
Shrews, Silent Women, and Boy Actors.....	139

CHAPTER		Page
IV	“UNRULY MEMBERS”: COMPLIANCE AND TRANSGRESSION IN <i>THE SHOEMAKER’S HOLIDAY</i> AND <i>THE ROARING GIRL</i>	155
	Tilney and Emergent Ideologies	159
	Margery Eyre’s Figurative Bridling	162
	Moll Cutpurse’s Defiance of the Cucking-Stool	170
V	SLANDERING INNOCENTS ON THE BATTLEFIELD OF MARRIAGE	189
	<i>The Duchess of Malfi</i> and <i>The Tragedy of Mariam</i>	192
	Willing a Positive Discourse	199
	Engaged in a Battle of Words	213
	Decapitating Discourse	224
VI	ABSENT MOTHERS, PRESENT DAUGHTERS: EMBODYING THE FEMALE IN COURTSHIP	239
	Pairing <i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i> and <i>Love’s Victory</i>	241
	Shakespeare’s Absent Mothers and Silenced Daughters	243
	Wroth’s Empowered Daughters	266
	<i>Love’s Victory</i> as a Response to Shakespeare	284
VII	PERFORMING “GOOD LANGUAGES”: THE CAVENDISH WOMEN’S DRAMATIC REVISIONS OF MARRIAGE	291
	Language and Performativity in <i>The Concealed Fancies</i>	294
	Homoeroticism and Performative Space in <i>The Convent of Pleasure</i>	313
	Epilogue	334
VIII	CONCLUSION: “WHY MAY NOT A LADY WRITE A GOOD PLAY?”	343
	WORKS CITED	352
	VITA	398

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: A PROLOGUE ON WOMEN, SPEECH, AND DRAMA

“Nothing, my lord.”—Cordelia in King Lear (1607)

*“[N]ow or never is the time to prove the courage of our Sex, to get liberty and freedome
from the Female Slavery, and to make our selves equal with men. . . .”*

—Lady Victoria in Bell in Campo (1662)

How did representations of early modern women in England move from images such as Cordelia’s troubling silence in the opening act of *King Lear* to portrayals like Lady Victoria’s bold voicing of male-female equality within marriage in the Second Part of Margaret Cavendish’s *Bell in Campo*? The answer to this question is to be found, in part, by attending to the performance of women’s speech in the male-dominated dramatic tradition and also to female responses to it. In popular early modern emblem books like those of Andrea Alciato or Geoffrey Whitney, silence was depicted as female, in keeping with the conduct book dictum that elevated woman’s silence as an indicator of both her obedience and her chastity (Orgel, *Authentic Shakespeare* 113-15). But women’s participation in almost every facet of early modern life—household management, medicine, business, government, religion, literature—suggests that early modern women were anything but silent. Perhaps as a result, then, women’s sharp tongues are frequently a focal point in the period, as the pamphlet wars of the continuing *querelle des femmes* and the rampant literary lampooning of shrewish wives attest. Why does women’s speech, particularly speech within or relative to marriage, create such

This dissertation follows the style of *The MLA Style Manual*.

apparent anxiety among early modern male writers? How are these anxieties about women's speech enacted on the English stage, the most popular form of entertainment in the period and the one representational arena where women's voices and silences were overtly embodied (even if the bodies involved were not female)? How might women playgoers have reacted to these representations of themselves? How do the representations of women as speakers differ in surviving dramas written by women? And what might all of this reveal about constructions of the female in early modern England? In an effort to answer these questions, this dissertation will examine trends in the representation of women's discursive agency, particularly as it relates to marriage, in representative English plays by both male and female authors between 1590 and 1660.

My interest lies in exploring and exploding the silence-speech dichotomy as it relates to dramatic representations of early modern women. For this reason, I have chosen to attend to those silences on the part of female characters that trouble readers or spectators, but, more importantly, to "trouble" the concept of silence in much the same way as Judith Butler uses the term in *Gender Trouble*. Decentering and redescribing what we have hitherto interpreted too unquestioningly as women's characteristic silence in the period is necessary to reinscribe the wide range of additional possibilities for women's speech suggested in their dramatic representations. In addition, rather than uncritically accepting the dominant (male) cultural view of the outspoken woman as shrewish or monstrous, a view often perpetuated on the professional stage in the period, I complicate the predominantly negative connotations of early modern woman's voice by attending to the ambiguities of such representations. Although dominant stage

representations tend to reinforce the simple silent-shrewish dichotomy, the tentative voicing of emergent ideologies in English drama hints at a continuum of discursive options for women, a representational range that was readily available for female playgoers to appropriate for their own real world performances. Furthermore, this range of early modern women's voices was considerably expanded and enlarged by women writers of the period, perhaps in direct response to the dominant representations of women on the public stage.

In a recent analysis of Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton's *Loose Papers*, Betty Travitsky has argued forcefully for "the inherent frailty of the *individual* woman" because of her subordination to the individual men in her life (*Subordination* 16-17). However, in my view, the wide variability of individual early modern women's situations also suggests possibilities for the opposite: not for containment, but for a degree of freedom. I will argue here that some women were able to gain a considerable measure of discursive agency through their writing, particularly through their dramatic representations of women, and, further, that female spectator's likely responses to the male dramatic tradition and that women dramatists' alterations of the dominant portrayals in that tradition indicate their collective dissatisfaction with the patriarchal status quo and their decisive attempts to transform it.

Theoretical Perspectives

"Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies. . . . Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement."

—Hélène Cixous (1976)

My general approach is the result of the intersections of several current theoretical perspectives on language, literature, and culture. My starting point is the influence of language on gender. I adhere to the idea of *discourse* set forth by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet as “socially meaningful” speech that contributes to the gradual construction of ideas and, further, according to Foucault, the formation of ideology (42).¹ In constructing an argument for women’s discursive agency, I use *agency* in the sense of possessing the capacity to act, both individually and collectively, my assumption being that acts of individual discursive agency by women may have contributed to an increased sense of their collective agency. My thinking is indebted to the transformative potential of *l’écriture féminine*, the gendered women’s writing described by French feminists. Both Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray emphasize the subversive multiplicity and plurality of female language, and the necessity, as Cixous puts it, of woman writing her self (878-81; 326-27). Margaret Ezell has suggested that we think of the production of *l’écriture féminine* not as limited only to the future, but as extant in the past if we know where and how to search for it (*Writing* 16). My attention to female-authored drama in close comparison to male-authored texts is a step in elucidating early modern female writing, in this sense.

My approach is also influenced by other feminist theoretical strains, particularly those that emphasize emergent discourses. Literature often voices multiple points of view, although the dominant discourse ultimately may recuperate any emergent voices. However, recent feminist approaches have emphasized instead those emergent

discourses and the effect of their voicing as exposing inherent contradictions in the patriarchal system, even if they are ultimately silenced. For instance, in her examination of Edmund Tilney's dialogue on marriage, *The Flower of Friendship*, Valerie Wayne argues that the emergent discourse of marriage voiced in Isabella's rejection of the institution is "not contained by the text; rather it opens *The Flower* up" (80). My approach will be to highlight the competition between emergent and dominant voices within patriarchal texts as well as to focus on the emergent discourses constituted by the female responses to them.

Representation theory is doubly significant to the present study because not only is the primary focus on dramatic representations of women, but these representations were staged in the professional early modern theater by men. Dymrna Callaghan's work has been particularly influential in this regard, contextualizing, as it does, the absence of women on the Renaissance stage and the additional interpretive remove of analyzing representations that were not only male-authored, but also intended for performance by male actors. Her discussion of castrati and vocal impersonation is a forceful and necessary reminder of the auditory qualities of women's representation in stage drama,² and thus the importance of voice, which I often highlight here. My contention is that the effect once women writers imagined themselves represented on stage by women cannot be underestimated.³

My work is also indebted to the theories of Judith Butler, who describes performativity as a continual process of reinscribing and redescribing gender. The bodily acts that suggest a gendered identity "are *performative* in the sense that the essence or

identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (185). Through these repeated performances, Butler claims, the illusion of a gender core within identity is established (187). The women writers whom I examine here seem to have been well aware on some level of this fictive aspect of gender and of their power to alter and reinscribe its presentation in their written performances.

Though performativity and performance are “invariably related,” as Butler would say almost a decade after *Gender Trouble* was published, she argues in her more recent work that a distinction between performativity and performance needs to be made (xxvi). Others see theatrical performance as a natural extension of performativity. One theorist whose work falls into this category is Elin Diamond, who advocates a gestic feminist criticism that emphasizes historical and sexual specificity in understanding both actors and audience. Drawing on Brecht’s theories of the alienation effect and *gestus* (a word or gesture that encodes social attitudes), Diamond advocates a dialectical engagement with the play text that “foreground[s] those moments . . . when social attitudes about gender and sexuality conceal or disrupt patriarchal ideology” (54).

Of particular interest for my purposes is Pamela Allen Brown’s recent study of early modern jesting culture, which attends to women’s representations in dramatic texts, but does not focus specifically on issues of their speech. What I find valuable here is Brown’s casting of jests, both dramatic and otherwise, as “cultural scripts that women

could use as prompts for their own performances or that could spur their laughter when enacted by others” (*Better a Shrew* 31). Brown claims that due to the purveyance of jests in broadsheets, jest books, and drama, they were so pervasively familiar in popular culture as to offer “templates for action” on which women might draw to “find weapons against the everyday reality of oppression” (222). It is, of course, pointless to speculate about women’s specific responses to dramatic performances or texts sans evidence, but, if we assume that dramatic representations of women in general might have provided similar cultural scripts for women’s reenactment (and I think that is a fair assumption given the widespread influence of drama in the period and women’s fairly ready access to it), then this underscores the value of an examination of dramatic representations of women’s speech. Even if we cannot presume that art was imitating nature, we have to be aware that nature quite likely *was*, at least to some degree, imitating art.

Women and Speech: Cultural and Historical Background

“Silence in a Woman is a mouing Rhetoricke, winning most, when in words it wooeth least”—Richard Brathwait, The English Gentlewoman (1631)

A woman’s domestic, legal, and social position in early modern England was defined by her marital status, by her position as a virgin, a wife, or a widow. Of the three, the wife’s position was in many ways the most restrictive. And with the exception of girls not yet of marrying age and widows who had sufficient wealth to allow them not to remarry, women generally were expected to marry and to produce heirs. Given the common analogy between the household and the kingdom, a married woman, known legally as a *feme covert*, was “doubly a subject, according to Karen Newman, in that she

owed obedience not only to the crown, but to her husband (18). She had limited property rights and exercised only those domestic and economic powers granted her by her husband. According to *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights*, “Every Feme Covert is quodammodo [in some measure] an infant” because her legal powers were severely limited, subject to her husband’s rights (Thomas 141).⁴

Two genres of literature that focus specifically on women’s behavior in the early modern period are works dealing with the “woman controversy” and conduct literature. Neither of these genres was new, as debates about the nature and place of women had raged on the continent for some time, but both had wide currency in the period under discussion. Influenced by translations of Boccaccio, Agrippa, and Castiglione in the mid-sixteenth century, and spurred by Thomas Elyot’s publication in 1540 of *The Defence of Good Women*, works on the formal controversy over women continued to be influential in England through the Jacobean period.⁵ Conduct literature, too, was extremely popular, with Edmund Tilney’s dialogue on marital duties, *The Flower of Friendshippe*, for example, published in seven editions between 1568 and 1587 (Wayne, *Flower* 5). These manuals, many of them directed specifically at wives, consistently emphasized the importance of their silence, chastity, and obedience. Typically, ideal wifely behavior was predicated on the control of a wife’s speech as an important form of subjection to her husband. Lorna Hutson explains the concern with wifely behavior by writers of conduct literature as a function of the humanist emphasis on the husband’s proper ordering of his household (85). As a result, popular works by Tilney, Whately, Gouge, Brathwait, and many others extol the virtues of the wife’s relative silence in

deference to her spouse's authority.

In *A Bride-Bush*, for instance, William Whately explains that a wife's speech and gestures must show reverence for her husband and warns that women, who are naturally prone to rude, scolding speech, must carefully control these tendencies (196-99). Such restraint exhibits her reverence for his authority: "verily this reuerence doth inioyne the woman silence, when her husband is present: I meane not an vtter abstinence from speech, but vsing fewer words (and those mild and low) not loud and eager" (200).

William Gouge's *Of Domesticall Duties* similarly suggests that wives' words "be few, reverend, and meeke" in their husbands' presence, but goes still further in recommending that they "keepe in their tongues with bit and bridle" in order to effect the appropriate spoken demeanor (281, 285). *The English Gentlewoman*, by Richard Brathwait, devotes more than a page to extolling the importance of thoughtful and considered speech to society, but then enjoins the decent English gentlewoman to refrain from speech altogether (88-89). He claims, "Silence in a *Woman* is a mouing Rhetoricke, winning most, when in words it wooeth least" (90).

According to a number of critics, common conceptions of speech and silence in the period often draw on texts by Cicero, Plutarch, Erasmus, and others, which modeled appropriate male speech, yet often described it in ambivalent or dualistic terms. For instance, rhetorical skill was valued, but excessive speech was condemned; similarly, silence could be seen as eloquent, or as threateningly inscrutable. Carla Mazzio describes a general nervousness in the period about the tongue's "apparent agency" as a sort of liminal, fluid member, at once both active and passive, that defies bodily

symmetry and tends to represent the entire body (55-57). However, nervousness regarding women's speech was generally far greater. Their eloquence was demonized, and negative speech traits, such as garrulity, frequently were seen as effeminate, perhaps explaining women as the focus of so much prescriptive advice.⁶ For example, Patricia Parker shows that even though talkativeness is presented as genderless in Erasmus's *Lingua*, it is nevertheless gendered female (446-50). The enthusiastic punishment of such behavior in women, labeled *shrews* and *scolds*, has been heavily documented.⁷

Silence, too, was double-edged—either compliant and eloquent, or threatening and subversive. Christina Luckyj's extensive work on silence and gender has complicated our understanding of silence in the period by showing that simple conflation of silence with subjection and speech with masculinity were unworkable (*'Moving Rhetorick'* 8-9). On one hand, women were subject to a widespread cultural silencing in which patriarchal discourses limited their speech in general, and marital authority limited their speech within the household. Karen Newman describes a gradual shift in the presentation of marital advice toward a reliance on binaries (like male-female, speech-silence), entrenching such thought as a means of organizing social relations (19-22). But, on the other hand, in spite of its frequent recommendation as an ideal behavior for women, silence, says Luckyj, was also a source of suspicion in conduct books and dramatic literature because of the possibility that it might open "a subjective rather than subjected space" (58-62, 56-57). Tita French Baumlin also has shown the importance of women's manipulation of silence as an acceptable means of fashioning a public self ("A good (wo)man" 243).

Considerable debate exists about whether conduct book recommendations were descriptive of women's actual practice. Historian Anthony Fletcher describes a highly effective gender system in which men controlled women's speech as a means of controlling their own personal agency. He says, "Women's talk always threatens disorder; women's silence thus comes to be prized to an absurd degree" (14). He concedes that many women learned to use the system to their own advantage and that anecdotal evidence indicates many happy marriages, but he nevertheless concludes that wifely submission, in speech as in all things, was the ideal (123-24, 190). Mark Breitenberg, who ascribes to a "crisis of order" theory of the period, comes to similar conclusions. Reading masculine anxieties as indicative of larger cultural tensions, he describes masculine identity formation as dependent upon the silent woman and conduct books as an attempt to speak for women, to construct their interiority (*Anxious Masculinity* 171, 193).

On the other hand, a number of recent critics see conduct book dicta as more purely prescriptive. For instance, Hutson believes that the excessive focus on wifely speech indicates not that married women typically behaved as conduct literature instructed them to do, but that such recommendations were largely ignored in practice (86). Newman agrees, urging us to see texts like Whately's *Bride-Bush* as producing rather than describing gender hierarchies (23). Newman's comment reminds us of the power of verbal representations to shape behavior, but this view also offers potential space for women's discursive agency, as uneven as those opportunities might have been given women's individual circumstances. Naomi Miller agrees that moments of

women's agency may have existed for speaking subjects (19). And Lynne Magnusson argues that it is in "the more problematic subject positions" of speech between subordinate and superior that "complex forms of subjectivity are in the making" (*Shakespeare* 49). Such variable power relations in the production of speech, which, as we have seen, would have affected female speakers, increase what she calls "voice potential," the possibility of reshaping language as symbolic capital (164, 181). Thus, the gap between the theory and practice of submissiveness advocated by conduct literature became an opportunity for some women to exercise their discursive agency.

Women and Drama: Theatrical Background

"The actors make it a different play. The audience makes it a different play."

—*Viola Davis, on performing Rose Maxson in August Wilson's Fences, 40 years after James Earl Jones's Tony-winning performance (2010)*

Drama is a particularly rich locus for an examination of representations of early modern women's agency because of its pervasive popularity and because of the peculiar insistence of the English public theater on the absence of women on stage.⁸ However, considerable recent attention has been directed toward revealing the many and varied contributions of women to English theatrical practice.⁹ Although excluded from writing or acting on the professional stage, women participated in household, court, and civic performances as well as in traveling troupes outside London. Even in London, at the Globe, Blackfriars, and other professional theaters, women were ticket gatherers, costumers, suppliers of stage properties, musicians, patrons, and spectators.

Give their significant presence in the audiences of both the outdoor

amphitheaters and the smaller, more fashionable indoor theaters,¹⁰ women also must have exerted considerable influence as consumers. Indeed, Findlay suggests that theater attendance be viewed as a “feminist act” because of the gender leveling of the price of admission (*Feminist Perspective* 3). At least one scholar has suggested that the new, more assertive woman seen in Jacobean drama is most likely the result of female playgoers’ demand for more desirable interpretations of themselves on stage (Woodbridge 266). But while playwrights might have pandered to women’s tastes to some degree, critics of theatrical practices, including, for instance, Stephen Gosson in his 1579 *Schoole of Abuse*, often focused on the considerable uneasiness generated by women’s presence in the theater. Jean Howard theorizes that women put themselves imaginatively into “circulation” by seeing and being seen in the theater; thus, their attendance was viewed as threatening to patriarchal control (“Women as Spectators” 83-84). As an additional threat to the status quo, the multiple points of view often presented in the public theater and the possibility of varied interpretations made women’s attendance a more risky proposition, especially for those who believed women more readily influenced and more easily deceived than men. Catherine Belsey describes late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century theater as participating in both the emblematic theater of the morality plays and the illusionist theater of the Restoration, and thus promoting a plurality of points of view (26-33). Since to some degree women (and men) learned gender roles by watching plays, such a plurality might as easily undermine as reinforce dominant discourses of gender, creating what many might see as a potentially threatening situation.¹¹ Even conventional stereotypes of women offered multiple

valences. Luckyj's description of the decentering nature of women's silence in dramatic performance suggests such a possibility. Because such silences were shared with the audience, they were therefore open to various interpretations (*'Moving Rhetoricke'* 78-79). This plurality was available for all spectators to inhabit imaginatively, but it offered women an unusual degree of opportunity for vicarious experimentation with varied subject positions. In fact, Breitenberg posits the public theater as the best analogy for the formation of identity and social agency in the period. The theater's "malleable structure," he says, offers opportunities for "limited but nonetheless vital versions of agency," and its staging reminds us that identity is always socially enacted (*Anxious Masculinity* 10).

Few clear indicators of women's responses to male-dominated theatrical practice or to its potentially transgressive implications remain available to us. Some scant records show that this or that lady attended this or that play, and we might know which ladies danced in which masques and what kinds of costumes they wore while doing so, but nowhere extant are any direct responses by any of these women to what they saw, heard, or performed. I argue here that the clearest and most direct, detailed responses to the professional theater are to be found in those dramas written by women during the heyday of the great playhouses and in the Interregnum, while the tremendous influence of the male-authored dramatic tradition was still quite current.¹² Although previously viewed as a separate genre of theatrical writing, the so-called "closet" dramas written by women during this period (so called because they were seen as private, reading texts, believed never to have been acted) have undergone a critical reevaluation, particularly in the last

decade.¹³ Following Ezell's redefinition of such "closet" texts as more properly "social" in nature, the trend has been to reintegrate women's dramatic tradition into the dominant male tradition (*Social Authorship* 39). For example, Julie Sanders has called for a "reintegration" of male and female dramatic authors and the examination of a "wholly more complex matrix of influence" than has previously been suggested ("A Woman Write" 294). And Gweno Williams has argued vociferously against the "critical blind spot" that has perpetuated an assessment of early modern dramatic output by women as inferior because their plays were viewed as not performable ("Why May Not" 95-98).¹⁴

To the contrary, as the work of Williams and others has shown, women's early modern drama offered unique potential for the expression of women's concerns and ideas. In her examination of Margaret Cavendish's dramatic discourse, Sue Wiseman generates excitement over "the *possibility* of complete gender congruity between part and actor" in women's Interregnum dramas (168). Furthermore, she suggests that these plays by women create a more fluid type of theater by fusing and transforming the gender codes of the private aristocratic theatrical, which elevates images of the ideal (but silent) female, and the public commercial theater, which often demonizes women (and their speech) (168-69). I want to suggest that plays authored by women during this period offer clear responses and correctives to women's representations in the dominant male theatrical tradition, thus creating a lively and, at times, contentious dialectic heralding women authors' entry into ideologically-inflected discourses on marriage. To borrow from Davis's comments on her present-day dramatic role, the writer, too, makes it a different play.

Overview

This study's chief aim is to examine representations of women's speech in early modern drama, particularly as it reveals attitudes regarding married women's discursive agency. In support of this objective, my general approach is threefold: 1) to briefly examine in women's first-person writing their stated understanding of their own roles as speakers and of drama and/or its techniques as a vehicle for conveying their personal viewpoints; 2) to examine representations of women's speech in selected plays from 1590 to 1660, particularly as these occur within marriage or relative to marriage; and 3) to compare representations of women's speech relative to marriage in male- and female-authored drama.

The period from 1590 to 1660 covers a broad swath of English literature, history, and culture. The starting date for this study has been selected for several reasons. First, early modern drama reached a peak of popularity in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, particularly in the public playhouses and private halls of fashionable London. During this time, the subgenres of city comedy and domestic tragedy broadened the social milieu of the London stage, peopling it with ordinary citizens and their wives as well as the usual kings and queens, and broadening the theater's general appeal. In addition, Andrew Gurr identifies 1590 as the approximate starting date for an increased attentiveness to audience on the part of playwrights (4), inviting speculation about whether and how male authors might have anticipated female playgoers' reactions in their stage representations of women at the turn of the

seventeenth century. Finally, because only men wrote for the public stage in this period and because female characters were performed by boy actors, gaining a clear understanding of trends in representations of women on the stage at this time is valuable when making comparisons to the earliest extant original dramas by women.

An ending date of 1660 has been chosen because it marks several significant changes, including the return to a monarchic and parliamentary status quo after the tumultuous years of the English Civil War and Interregnum. The numerous diaries, letters, and devotional books by women from this period, both in print and manuscript form, have shown that women achieved greater social equality and freedom during this period, often managing their husbands' estates and making important familial and political decisions in their husbands' absences. At the same time, more women were writing drama, in spite of the closure of the public theaters, and more of their plays are extant. Finally, by 1660, women writers were poised to contribute significantly to the public theater for the first time. Examining the years that generally go unaccounted for in theater history not only may provide crucial clues for understanding changing dramatic representations of women but also may lay the groundwork for an understanding of women's increased participation in the dramatic sphere as writers and actresses during the Restoration.

Dramatic representations of women's speech as it relates to marriage seem a particularly rich locus for examining early modern constructions of gender for several reasons. First, marital interaction is in many ways at the heart of the gender system, one of the basic functions of which was (and still is) to ensure coupling and reproduction.

Because married women ideally were to be silent or restrained in their speech, their spoken interactions with husbands, and, particularly, the degree to which such speech supports or contradicts the ideal, would seem to be particularly revealing. Further, a number of changes in the early modern period directly affected the marital relationship, including a gradual trend toward companionate marriages rather than arranged marriages, a movement away from the family as a closed unit of production to the family as an affective unit, and an ideological shift away from the family as an analog of the body politic, with the husband's theoretically benevolent authority extending over his subject/wife (Ferguson, Quilligan, and Vickers xviii; Amussen 39). As Martin Ingram notes, the family and household were clearly the site of increased tension in the period ("Family" 93).

One form which early modern household tension seems to have taken is an intense anxiety regarding female speech, exhibited, as we know, in the compliant or silent woman repeatedly lauded in the conduct books. In his study of male anxiety in the period, Mark Breitenberg sketches an "obvious opposition . . . between the speaking and writing man over and against the silenced woman" ("Anxious Masculinity" 391). Boose, too, describes a "history of silencing" through which she says women were "shamed, tamed, and reconstituted" as suitable members of society ("Scolding Brides" 213). Yet despite this persistent anxiety, we know that not all women were silenced or shamed within marriage. Examining the issue of silencing versus speech in drama, a form that relies on the spoken word, offers us vivid representations of speaking women of the period—images not readily available elsewhere—alongside images of women who are

silenced or who choose not to speak. What do dramatic representations reveal about married women's silencing and speaking? Further, when we compare male-authored and female-authored texts side by side, as Gillian Beer suggests we do to better understand literature of the past (77), what information do we gain regarding representations of married women's speech in early modern drama? Answers to these questions would contribute to a more complete understanding of gendered constructions in the period.

My examination of selected women's lifewriting (including correspondence, diaries, and devotional writings as well as dedicatory letters and prefaces) and of plays authored by both men and women in the period will reveal the following: 1) drama was an attractive form to women in the period for representing their discursive agency and its transgressive possibilities; 2) both male and female dramatic authors often posit women's language use as a crucial concern, even in dramas for which the critical canon has not previously recognized the centrality of women's speech issues; and 3) while both male and female writers of the period can be shown to explore the nature and importance of women's speech with subtlety, and, at times, to deplore the rhetorical constrictions on women as tragic, female writers are far more likely to represent women's freedom to speak within marriage as a pressing issue of marital and societal rights. Further, women's drama often constitutes a direct response to representations of women on the male stage, creating a dialectical relationship between male- and female-authored drama and between competing ideologies of marriage and of gender.

Chapter II, "The Bride's Mouth Opened: Attitudes toward Marital Speech in Women's Lifewriting," makes what may seem at first an odd departure. However, since

the great majority of statements about women's speech in the period were written by men, examining women's first-person writing—including dedicatory letters, prefaces, mother's legacies, correspondence, diaries, and memoirs—in an attempt to discern their attitudes toward their own speech seems an appropriate counterbalance. Like drama and other more purely literary forms, letters and lifewriting involve representation. Even so, first-person writing offers a supplemental view to those representations provided in dramatic (and other literary) texts. In addition, women's lifewriting frequently employs theatrical elements, including metaphor, theatrical display, and dramatic dialogue, to suggest the importance to women of dramatic performance as a means of self presentation. An examination of such writing by women supports my contention that dramatic presentations may have been viewed as a sort of cultural currency on which women might draw in daily life. Furthermore, the richness and variety of speech within and about marriage in women's lifewriting provides important background for an examination of women's representations in both dominant and emergent theatrical traditions.

In Chapter III, "Slippery Tongues: Shrews and Silent Women on the Early Modern Stage," I explore the most common stereotypes of women and women's speech on the male-dominated professional London stage: the shrew and the silent woman. A comparison of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and Ben Jonson's *Epicene, or The Silent Woman* reveals that both plays subvert these stereotypes even as they exploit them through an illustration of men's inability to successfully read women's verbal performances and the male characters' consequent attempts to control and direct

women's speech as authoritative husbands and dramatists. In Shakespeare's play, the presentation of the shrew is complicated by its, at times, sympathetic treatment of Katherine; by the male characters' inability to successfully read subtle clues about both Katherine and Bianca; and by the context, imagery, and hyperbole of Kate's final speech, which argue against a straightforward submissive reading. Jonson's play, too, complicates the use of the opposing stereotype—the silent, submissive woman—questioning not only the possibility but the desirability of finding a wife such as the one Morose desires. But, finally, the silent woman proves inconceivable, and the dramatic revelation of Epicene as male is orchestrated by Dauphine, who acts as dramatist in order to silence the threateningly masculine female characters. The chapter ends with speculation about the reaction of female playgoers to the boy actors in both of these plays and suggests that some women may have objected to the negative constructions of the female gender that they depict.

The wide range of discursive positions available to female characters vis-à-vis marriage is the focus of Chapter IV, “‘Unruly Members’: Compliance and Transgression in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and *The Roaring Girl*.” Neither of these plays is acknowledged in the critical literature as centrally connected to issues of women's speech, yet both plays exhibit a crucial concern with women's language use. In *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, Margery Eyre is gradually silenced by a verbally abusive husband, willingly trading her verbal freedom for the luxuries her husband's rising status affords. Moll Cutpurse's use of multiple discursive registers and her defiance of the cucking-stool in the final speech of *The Roaring Girl* evince the fundamental importance

of her linguistic freedom, which she describes specifically as a result of her freedom from marriage. These plays serve not only to further complicate the stereotypical images discussed in Chapter III, but also offer a range of discursive options in between shrewishness and silence that may have been appropriated by the attentive female spectator.

Chapters V and VI take a cross-gendered approach to comparative readings of drama by pairing male- and female-authored plays with similar plots, themes, and characters. “Slandering Innocents on the Battlefield of Marriage” analyzes two outspoken wives, both of whom die because of their perceived transgressions of the male social-political order: the titular characters in Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam* and John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*. In comparing the discursive agency of the two heroines, I build a case for the female author’s more thorough-going critique of gender norms than in the male author’s representation. While the tragic end to the Duchess’s companionate marriage is more clearly the result of her violation of familial expectations, Mariam’s death is an unmistakable call for social and political reform.

“Absent Mothers, Present Daughters: Embodying the Female in Courtship,” Chapter VI, offers a comparative reading of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Mary Wroth’s *Love’s Victory*, with their multiple premarital couples whose romances are orchestrated by fairies and gods. Here I argue that Wroth’s emphasis on women’s physical bodies, especially their voices, and her embodiment of the absent votaress of Shakespeare’s play in the character of Silvesta, represent a refiguring of the female’s role in courtship. Wroth’s play is a response to the general disfiguring of the female in

male-authored drama and, perhaps, to the silencing of the female characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in particular.

In the final chapter, "Performing 'Good Languages': The Cavendish Women's Dramatic Revisions of Marriage," Elizabeth Brackley and Jane Cavendish's *The Concealed Fancies* and Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure* are examined to show their authors' uses of women's speeches critiquing marriage and their attempts to refashion the conventional marital relationship. Both plays interrogate husbands' treatment of wives, illustrate women's use of performance to explore and articulate their views with respect to marriage, and employ the convent as an alternative to marriage, but with quite different effects. *The Concealed Fancies* advocates a subtly transgressive revision of the marital order through its main characters' performative experiments with retaining a self within marriage. *The Convent of Pleasure*, on the other hand, goes still further in challenging normative marriage by revealing both marriage and the gender order on which it is based as performative, highly dependent on women's use of discursive and theatrical agency.

My conclusion returns briefly to *Bell in Campo* to suggest some concrete ways in which emergent representations of female discursive agency, like those penned by Cary, Wroth, and the Cavendishes, contribute to the ongoing dialectic about women and marriage on the early modern stage.

Notes

¹ See *The Archaeology of Knowledge* on the necessity of rethinking our approaches to discursive formations. Foucault defines discourse not as a “rhetorical or formal unity” but as “a fragment of history, a unity and discontinuity in history itself, posing the problem of its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality rather than its sudden irruption in the midst of the complicities of time” (117).

² See *Shakespeare Without Women*, especially 49-74.

³ See, for instance, Sue Wiseman on the importance of gender congruity between actor and performer (168).

⁴ Recent scholarship has stressed the ways in which women were able to exploit their limited property rights in order to gain some measure of financial independence and security. See Amy Erickson, for example. For a good overview of the social and cultural position of early modern women, see Mendelson and Crawford, especially Chapters one and three.

⁵ See Linda Woodbridge’s excellent volume on this genre.

⁶ On the demonization of female eloquence, see, for example, Belsey (178-91).

⁷ See, for example, Dolan (*Taming*); Boose (“Scolding Brides”); Ingram (“Scolding women”); and Underdown.

⁸ See Orgel (“Nobody’s Perfect”).

⁹ The following provide a representative sampling: Findlay on household and court performances (“Theatres”); Ravelhofer on women on the courtly stage; McManus on the trope of the Jacobean theatrical woman; and Brown and Parolin’s excellent volume on women players. A recent session at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America in Venice is exemplary of current work in this area, including papers by Natasha Korda on the participation of Dutch immigrants in the Norwich pageant of 1578 (“Alien Women”); Pamela Allen Brown on the influence of continental actresses on the figure of “player queens” on the English stage (“Othering Heights”); and Eric Nicholson on images of Venetian female public performers and their influence on the characterization of Desdemona and Celia in *Othello* and *Volpone*.

¹⁰ See Gurr’s conclusions about the frequency of citizens’ wives and ladies as playgoers (76).

¹¹ Fletcher claims that men learned their gender roles through popular literary forms like plays and ballads (105). I suggest that women were similarly influenced by popular art.

¹² Marguérite Corporaal has recently argued convincingly that the earliest English women dramatists adopted alternative dramatic forms precisely to overcome their exclusion from professional dramatic entertainments (“‘To be’” 190-91).

¹³ See Karen Raber’s excellent study of Senecan closet drama, *Dramatic Difference*.

¹⁴ See also Findlay, Williams, and Hodgson-Wright’s article on recent successful stagings of *The Tragedy of Mariam*, *Concealed Fancies*, and *The Convent of Pleasure*.

CHAPTER II

THE BRIDE'S MOUTH OPENED: ATTITUDES TOWARD MARITAL SPEECH IN WOMEN'S LIFEWRITING¹

In 1666, Quaker writer and activist Margaret Fell published a theological defense of women's religious speech entitled *Women's Speaking Justified*. Fell, who was later to marry Quaker minister George Fox, argues that God does not distinguish between men and women who understand and accept Christ and, therefore, that both should be equally capable of responding to God's word in church meetings. She uses the common biblical analogy of the Church as bride and Christ as Bridegroom, arguing that in the "True Church" the bridegroom opens the bride's mouth rather than stopping it (17). Fell's argument was not new: other female religious activists earlier in the century had attempted to build their own cases for women's spiritual equality with men and their consequent freedom of religious expression in response to Paul's injunction against women's speech in 1 Corinthians.² But what is particularly interesting is Fell's use of the *marital* metaphor in justifying women's speech. When we take the gendering of Fell's argument into account, the bride's mouth that Fell desires opened has certain inescapable associations with the culturally mandated submissive wife in the early modern period. And, if we can believe the conduct literature, her opened mouth would loose a shrew whose scolding was as threatening to domestic concord (and presumably also to congregational harmony) as adultery.

Everywhere in conduct literature of the period is the dictum that the wife remain chaste, silent, and obedient. As we saw in Chapter I, her voice should be used sparingly

and in submission to male authority. For instance, in the 1622 treatise *Of Domesticall Duties*, William Gouge recommends that a wife's words "be few, reverend, and meeke" in her husband's presence (281). Similarly, in *The English Gentlewoman*, a 1631 companion volume to his popular conduct manual for gentlemen, Richard Brathwaite depicts a silent tongue as "a mouing Rhetoricke, winning most, when in words it wooeth least" (90). But, as Ezell and others have argued, the pervasiveness of such injunctions on women's speech suggests that many women did not follow the customary prescriptions.³ Since no similar body of conduct literature by women exists, we are left to wonder what women's reactions to the male-dominated conduct literature and to common literary representations of their gender might have been. What might women have advised other women about their speech? What speech practices did women strive for within their own marriages? What norms of spoken marital interaction did they achieve?

Although few direct comments by women on the subject have come down to us, it is possible to make some inferences about women's general attitudes toward their speech. This chapter will draw on the lifewritings of more than two dozen women, composed between the 1560s and 1670s, to illustrate the diversity of attitudes toward women's speech, toward marriage, and, in particular, toward marital speech—that is, speech within or relative to marriage.⁴ These writings exemplify a generally greater tolerance of wives' rhetorical agency toward the mid-seventeenth century, perhaps as a result of the evolution of marriage as a companionate arrangement and also of the increased scope of women's actions to protect their families and their fortunes during the

tumultuous and dangerous civil war years. The fluidity of the boundaries between speech and writing is indicated by frequent metaphors of embodiment in the correspondence of both men and women in the period, but such metaphors, I will argue, gain particular importance in a discussion of women's rhetorical agency in a period in which their bodies were contested sites. Finally, I will show that frequent stage metaphors and references to dramatic entertainment suggest a general belief in the reciprocity between art and nature and, further, in the importance of theatrical convention as a vehicle for women's self-representation.

Lifewriting offers fertile ground for this research for several reasons. Such first-person writing was the most common type of women's writing in the period. According to James Daybell, letters were the "most copious" form, and the frequent devotional exercise of keeping a spiritual journal seems to have given rise to a wave of mothers' legacies, as well as to secular diaries and occasional memoirs.⁵ Even dedicatory epistles, in spite of their highly conventionalized form, may offer occasional glimpses into their writers' personal views. In addition, the boundaries between orality and writing were considerably more fluid in the early modern period than they are today, allowing for a loose interpretation of women's first-person writing as "speech."⁶ Finally, diaries, memoirs, devotional writings, and correspondence offer glimpses into women's daily lives, thoughts, and emotions in a somewhat more direct way than the dramas, romances, or poetry they penned. Although it would be a mistake to assume that any of the genres examined in this chapter is free of conventions that affect form, content, and style, such first-person writing is perhaps the closest we can come to opening the bride's mouth.

Conventions of Women's Lifewriting

As Sheila Ottway observes, woman's subordinate position in early modern English society complicated her attempts to write about herself, making lifewriting "a potentially transgressive activity" ("Autobiography" 231). Likewise, Helen Wilcox comments on the "uncertainty inherent in the enterprise of autobiography, particularly for a woman" ("Her Own Life" 117). However, the wide range of first-person writing still extant (and certainly a good deal has been lost) either belies the transgressiveness of writing about self for a woman in the period or, more likely, suggests that many women felt sufficient pleasure and empowerment in the task to justify the potential risk. As Wilcox says in discussing the spiritual or textual independence that might be felt by women writers in spite of their lack of material independence: "self-writing *was* living for some seventeenth-century Englishwomen" (116).

Two aspects of studying early modern lifewriting that present particular difficulties for the twenty-first-century scholar are the danger of identifying too closely with women whose lives were so unlike our own and the probability of interpreting their writing too transparently.⁷ According to Elspeth Graham, both the nature of self or identity, and the relationship of that selfhood to language or writing were, and still are, areas of confusion and contention (209). In examining these issues in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century women's writing, she detects three complicating factors: the generic instability of lifewriting; the ambiguity of women as subjects; and the "incomplete recovery" of their writings (209-10). Graham describes a wide variety of autobiographical forms, circulated in ways that often blurred distinctions between public

and private, and between reality and fiction (210-12). In addition, notions of identity in these works were based on varying definitions of the self—social, religious, political, or legal—with identity being always more complex for women, as subordinates to men. As a result, Graham claims, “Writing the self for such women is a matter of negotiating, exploiting or denying a whole range of social and discursive determinants” (217). In spite of this, factors such as increased literacy, a budding sense of individualism, the rise of radical religious sects, and the relaxing of controls on the press during the civil war gave women greater opportunity than ever before to voice themselves in first-person writing. Understanding the conventions that pertain to autobiography and correspondence of the period is of paramount importance in examining women’s lifewriting.

Autobiographical texts of the period have several features in common: a sense of shared identity; a distinctly female perspective; a keen awareness of the writing process; and an emphasis on the truthfulness of the presentation (Graham et al 22-25). Helen Wilcox further identifies a “discourse of privacy” and lack of intent to publish as characteristic (“Private Writing” 47). Wilcox describes the “initial impetus” to write as often devotional in nature, and Mendelson’s sample of Stuart women’s diaries and occasional memoirs bears this out: three-fourths of her sample is devotional in nature (48; “Stuart Women’s Diaries” 185-86).⁸ In fact, Mendelson suggests that much autobiographical writing that was non-devotional in nature was unsaved because of the marked preference among seventeenth- to nineteenth-century editors for images of female piety (188). Additional motivations for keeping a diary might include personal

record-keeping; preservation of a family history; self-justification or self-revision; discerning a meaning for one's life; delight in writing; or desire for self-analysis (Wilcox 48-49; Seelig 1). Frequently, these texts exhibit what Wilcox describes as "an inwardness of focus and an unpolished mode of writing" (49). This does not mean, however, that these texts were strictly private because writers often "intermingled matters of domestic and national importance" (59), and texts also may have been shared with friends or family members. Both secular and religious autobiographies imitated models, allowing their writers to select from and revise a culturally available range of self-representations (Ottway, "Autobiography" 232). Mendelson claims that women's diaries tended to reflect their three contemporary life-stages—virginity, marriage, and widowhood—unlike men's, which centered on class and occupation (199). Virginity was consistently presented as the most enjoyable stage, while marriage was portrayed as a time of submission based on contemporary religious teachings, and widowhood was depicted using either a positive, matriarchal model or a model of personal and economic failure (191-99). Autobiographical writing was, thus, to use Foucault's terminology, a "technology of the self," an opportunity for women to compose a self through writing.⁹ Sharon Cadman Seelig notes, "the movement toward a stronger sense of self and a willingness to put oneself—or some version thereof—in a prominent position in a text, even if not intended immediately for publication, is striking" (12).

Spiritual journals had additional motivations when compared to their secular counterparts. Like correspondence and other diaries, spiritual autobiography was also a technology of the self, one in which, according to Tom Webster, "the godly self was

maintained, indeed constructed, through the act of writing” (40). Because of the spiritual process prescribed in Christian conduct literature, based on precedents beginning with Augustine and St. John Chrysostom, the narrative was more rigidly structured than a secular autobiography, presenting the conversion of the sinful self into a religious self fit to offer to Christ (42-47). Webster comments on the common practice of reviewing one’s earlier diary entries, forming “a dialogue between past and present” as the writer attempted to evaluate daily behavior and assess spiritual progress (48). In addition, he argues that “the text of writing became a minor and personal scripture, to the clearly major and general Scripture”—“a micro-narrative of grace,” as it were (50, 53). The spiritual diary thus records a process of becoming, one it would be dangerous to see as complete because doing so would mean that one is assured of enlightenment (54-55).

Spiritual autobiographies by women lent their writers a religious and political authority they might not otherwise possess, given their constricted legal and social roles in early modern England. Suzanne Trill claims, “paradoxically, while Christianity provided an ideological basis for the idealisation of female silence, it also required their speech to defend it; thus, the very discourse that sought to oppress women can also be seen to facilitate a release” (50). Piety played an important role in the everyday lives of women, and religious practice, including speech and writing, provided an opportunity for them to transcend culturally prescribed gender roles, however briefly. Especially in mid-seventeenth century, with the proliferation of various radical religious sects—including Independents, Baptists, Fifth Monarchists, and Quakers—emphasis on the spiritual equality of men and women was increasingly common, allowing women some

measure of involvement in politics, given a civil war so closely bound up with religious upheaval (see Graham et al 12-16). As Diane Willen argues, Puritan introspection during the Caroline period allowed some women a “form of participation that integrated spiritual and political imperatives” (56).

Early modern women’s letter writing is indicative of their religious and political activities as well as their domestic lives. Daybell argues that “no single medium is as potentially illuminating as letters” (*Women Letter-Writers* 6), and Gary Schneider and Fay Bound both value early modern letters as reflections of affective exchange. But letters are nevertheless subject to certain generic and rhetorical conventions which make it impossible to accept them at face value as representations of interiority (Daybell 6).¹⁰ Letters were commonly viewed as a gift, imposing a reciprocal obligation (see Bounds 10-11; Daybell 159-65). Like autobiography or memoir, letters represent a technology of the self which allowed female letter-writers to draw on available social and cultural scripts to compose a self or, indeed, multiple selves in their correspondence (Daybell 167-69). Unfortunately, surviving correspondence privileges the elite, but indirect evidence of cultural practices indicates that letter writing was a common activity at all levels, especially as more women learned to write for themselves (37-38). In the large sample of women’s letters written between 1540 and 1603 studied by Daybell, 50 percent of the letters were addressed to family members, most of them from wives to husbands, and roughly 33 percent were to government officials (40-41). Although Daybell describes the range of thought in letters as broader than of diaries with their more confessional nature, he characterizes letters as less private and introspective than

we might think because of the use of amanuenses and the common practice of circulating letters among family members (45-46, 61-63, 138-41). However, later in the sixteenth century, women's correspondence, especially the familiar letter, was much more likely to be written personally (87, 95). In addition, a higher degree of privacy seems to have been common with regard to letters between married couples (110-11). Daybell also remarks that women became more "emotionally articulate" in the latter half of the Tudor period, perhaps because of increased female literacy (enabling women to write to their husbands without assistance), changing gender codes, and the immediacy of letters as a genre (228).

General Attitudes toward Women's Speech

Women's attitudes toward their speech, as expressed in their letters, diaries, memoirs, and spiritual journals, vary widely. Undoubtedly many women continued to ascribe to the silent, submissive ideal, but perhaps those women were less likely to write as extensively as did many of the women discussed in the following pages. Many women of the middling and lower classes may have been unable to write, and the writings of those who could were less likely to be preserved than those of women from the nobility or gentry. Further, those writings that have survived often have been edited or retained selectively in order to provide an impression that male descendants or editors deemed more appropriately feminine.¹¹ Such revision of the woman's voice often began much earlier, perhaps self-imposed as a result of social, familial, or political pressures, and sometimes compelled at death, as families sought to heighten their reputations (and preachers to flatter their benefactors) by extolling individual women's submissiveness

and religious perfection in funeral sermons. The latter motivation is expressed clearly in the verses on the funeral effigy of Lady Katherine Paston of Norfolk, who died in 1629:

CAN MAN BE SILENT AND NOT PRAISE FINDE
 FOR HER THAT LIVES THE PRAISE OF WOEMAN KINDE
 WHOSE OVTWARD FRAME WAS LENT THE WORLD TO GESS
 WHAT SHAPES OVR SOVLES SHALL WEARE IN HAPPINES
 WHOSE VERTUE DID ALL IL SOE OVERSWAYE
 THAT HER WHOLE LIFE WAS A COMVNION DAYE (Hughey 24)

Purportedly written by John Donne, Paston's effigy verse makes her a monument to female virtue, the chief effect of which is to spur male speech while silencing the woman herself. Paston's letters offer quite different testimony, however, as in a clear, intelligent voice, she conducts legal business on behalf of her ill husband and offers motherly advice to her son William at Cambridge.

Perhaps not surprisingly, many of the voices that have come down to us are the voices of women who saw themselves as writers in a more professional sense, and, while superficially submissive, those voices often subtly, yet forcefully argue the merit of women's rhetorical agency in their dedicatory letters. For instance, Isabella Whitney emphasizes the value of her activity in compiling the verses that make up *A Sweet Nosgay* in her dedicatory letter to George Mainwaring. She offers her poems, inspired by Hugh Plat's aphorisms in his 1572 *Floures of Philosophie*, as a recompense for the friendship of her Cheshire countryman, saying, "though they be of anothers growing, yet . . . they be of my owne gathering and making up" (3-4). Similarly, Aemilia Lanyer

claims her text a “Mirroure of a worthy Mind” in the dedicatory verses to Queen Anne in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, not only flattering her dedicatee but suggesting the worthiness of her own mind to reflect Anne’s (l. 37). Although she uses conventional humility topoi in describing her own “untun’d voyce” and begging pardon for her presumption in tackling a subject seen as the province of male religious scholars, she also clearly suggests in closing that her art is “from Nature” and, therefore, of a higher degree of perfection than men’s (ll. 103, 151). In the dedicatory sonnet to *The Tragedy of Mariam*, entitled “To Diana’s Earthly Deputess, and My Worthy Sister, Mistress Elizabeth Cary,” Elizabeth Cary, too, flatters her dedicatee, one of two sisters-in-law who share her name (Weller and Ferguson 151). She compares her sister-in-law to Phoebe and Diana, both conventionally associated with the moon, and claims that her light is powerful enough “T’illumine the now obscured Palestine” of Cary’s play, thus providing a compliment to her identically named counterpart and creating a mirror image not unlike that used by Lanyer (l. 12). Cary’s rhetorical agency is consequently enhanced as the medium through which the light of her female muse is directed.

Women who perhaps did not see themselves primarily as writers, or at least who did not participate in the more fashionable verse forms, also display their interest in and effectiveness with words. An awe of the spoken word is evinced by Alice Thornton, a Yorkshire woman whose autobiography was recorded in three manuscript volumes, perhaps begun after the death of her husband in 1668. Thornton records being deeply impressed at age 12 with Christ’s ability at the same age to confound his listeners to silence, according to Luke 2:49. She also clearly enjoys retelling stories in her narrative

that she can only have heard from others, such as Lords Mackmaughan and Mackguire's failed attempt to take Dublin Castle in 1641 during the Irish rebellion. This incident occurred not long after the death of Thornton's father, Christopher Wandesford, who had served under the Earl of Strafford, Lord Deputy of Ireland from 1632 until his impeachment in 1640 (18, 28-30).

Lady Anne Halkett's memoir, written in the late 1670s and covering significant historical events from the 1640s to 1660s, displays a conviction of her ability to resist others' persuasion and to be, herself, the persuasive speaker. In 1644, when Thomas Howard, two years her junior and brother of her close friend Anne Howard, pressures her to marry secretly, she describes her rejection of his plan, in spite of her apparent attraction to him, as "fixt beyond any perswasion" (14). She is later quite blunt in her speech with Mr. Nicholls, chaplain to Anne Howard. Halkett describes Nicholls, in a manner editor John Loftis calls "consciously ironic," as the "tutelary angell" of the household, and records at length his attempts to dishonor her with Anne by making Anne think her in love with Anne's husband, Charles (32, 35-48). When she leaves the household for Scotland in an attempt to curry favor with Charles II and possibly recover her marriage portion, she reports her blunt expressions of disapproval on taking leave of Nicholls (49-50). Later, while residing with the Count and Countess of Dunfermline in Aberdeenshire between 1650 and 1652, she is asked by the pregnant Countess to intercede with some rude, violent English soldiers who are quartering in the house during the Count's absence. Amazingly, Halkett is able to calm the unruly men by appealing to their Englishness and their sense of honor, asking them not to frighten "a

person of honor who is great with child, and few butt children and weemen in the howse” (59). These incidents suggest both Halkett’s faith in her own speaking ability as well as others’ dependence on her persuasive skills.

However, there are clearly many instances in which women were not so blunt or direct in their speech. Many women of the period express their consciousness of the submissive ideal even while flouting it. For instance, in a letter dated 20 January 1620, Paston complains to Sir John Heveningham, married to her husband Edmund’s sister, because he has sided with a trustee of the family estate in a suit blocking Edmund’s inheritance. She chides him for his unresponsiveness to her plight, yet, at the same time, she is conscious not to be viewed as overly emotional or long-winded. Thus, she apologizes for “trubling you so much *with* my criblinge. But for that my hart is very full. for beinge wrongfully condemned by you and my good sister Heveningham. I am the bowlder to make this long discourse” (53). Lady Elizabeth Russell at times evinces similar concern for the appropriateness of her speech in spite of her reputation for outspokenness. In an April 1566 letter to William Cecil, her eldest sister’s husband and Elizabeth’s chief adviser, she offers her words as “very small recompense” for his services in the recent knighting of her husband, Thomas Hoby, and apologizes if “any word not fit passed unawares out of my mouth in my speech used to you, touching my husband, at Westminster” (Farber 75). In both of these instances, the writers’ apologies clearly have political motivations, yet they also offer obvious evidence that these women knew the cultural expectation of submissiveness for their speech and writing, and also how far they might go in pushing these boundaries.

This ambivalence about speaking boldly, yet remaining sufficiently submissive to avoid violating cultural and social expectations finds expression in Margaret Cavendish's seemingly contradictory attitudes toward women's speech. In spite of her confidence as a writer and scholar, she frequently condemns women as speakers. For instance, she objects to the harshness of women's speech in the Preface to *The World's Olio*, saying that "Women's Tongues are like Stings of Bees," and in *Sociable Letters*, comparing the female sex negatively to the emblem of Justice, saying the sword is in women's mouths (136; 31). She criticizes women who are incapable of restraint in their speech: "we cannot Restrain our Tongues from Speaking, although it be on such Themes as we Understand not, or of such Subjects or Causes as we have nothing to do with" (*Sociable Letters* 112). She also frequently urges silence to moderate women's stereotypical talkativeness, suggesting in the Preface to *Orations of Diverse Sorts*, for example, that her readers "be Silently Wise, [rather] than Foolish in Rhetorick" (88).

Yet even as she disparages women's "Empty Sounds," as she puts it at one point, she implies their rhetorical potential (*Female Orations* 144). At the end of the Preface to *Orations*, she invites her readers into "the Chief Market-Place" of "a Metropolitan City," an interesting metaphor because it situates her as speaker in a highly public forum (89). Similarly, in the *Female Orations* from the same volume, the fourth speaker suggests that women "Converse in Camps, Courts, and Cities, in Schools, Colleges, and Courts of Judicature, in Taverns, Brothels, and Gaming Houses" in order to gain greater experience and to exercise their intelligence (145). That Cavendish includes the seven female speakers of the *Female Orations*, vocal as they are in their disagreements

regarding the condition and status of women, indicates her belief in women's potential as intelligent and respectable speakers. In *Sociable Letters*, the persona she adopts for her model letters describes her admiration of effective impromptu speaking:

Neither do I admire Formal Orators, that speak Premeditated Orations, but Natural Orators, that can speak on a Sudden upon any subject, whose Words are as Sweet and Melting as Manna from Heaven, and their Wit as Spreading and Refreshing as the Serene Air, whose Understanding is as Clear as the Sun, giving Light of Truth to all their Hearers, who in the case of Perswasion, speak Sweetly, in case of Reproof, Seasonably, and in all cases, Effectually. (38)

She never specifically addresses gender in this letter, yet she seems to imply in her confessed admiration for eloquence and in her own activities as a writer that women, too, can aspire to be gifted natural speakers. In fact, on several occasions, she seems to blame women's general lack of education for their deficiencies. In the Preface to *The Worlds Olio*, she sides with the prevailing medical and scientific thought of her day that men are stronger and smarter than women, yet claims that "Education and Custom" may be partially responsible for the differences (136). This, in turn, affects their speaking abilities, as she later argues in *Sociable Letters*, causing them to have difficulty controlling their passions, and thus, to "err in Words" (36).

Women's general ambivalence toward public speech and the ambiguous position in which public speech placed them can be observed in the justifications for writing offered by writers of mothers' legacies in the period. The advice books written by

Dorothy Leigh, Elizabeth Jocelin, and Elizabeth Richardson, which span a thirty-year period from early- to mid-seventeenth century in dates of original publication, provide examples of perhaps the only type of conduct literature to be written by women. Leigh's *The Mothers Blessing* was reprinted regularly at least 14 times between 1616 and 1685, while Jocelin's *The Mothers Legacie, to her vnborn Childe* was reprinted at least four times between 1624 and 1635 and then, inexplicably, once more, almost fifty years later in 1684. Elizabeth Richardson's *A Ladies Legacie to Her Daughters* was apparently published only once, in 1645. As Kristen Poole argues, these texts are remarkable for their liminal position between the privacy of the maternal world and the public realm of publication, suggesting perhaps a greater fluidity between public and private than we have generally assumed in the period and creating a level of flexibility that "actually facilitated, rather than hindered some women's writing" (71). These legacies are examples of mothers' familial speech to their children extended to a much broader audience.

In the dedicatory letter to her sons, Leigh stresses several factors in her choice to write. Her husband's death, her children's youth, and her own illness are all factors in her decision to record her advice for her sons George, John, and William: "seeing myself going out of the world, and you but comming in, I know not how to perform this duty so well, as to leave you these few lines, which will shew you as well the great desire your Father had both of your spirituall and temporal good, as the care I had to fulfill his will in this, knowing it was the last duty I should performe unto him" (A6v-A7). Her duties as wife seem somewhat to overshadow her motherly apprehension in this formulation,

yet she then justifies her decision to make her motherly advice public with the (perhaps unlikely) concern that the text be equally accessible to all three of her sons. For this reason, she says, “I have aduentured to show my imperfections to the view of the World, not regarding what censure shall for this bee laid upon mee, so that heerin I may shew my selfe a louing Mother, and a dutifull Wife” (A7-A7v).

Leigh’s text, then, clearly envisions a much broader audience, and she later enumerates among her reasons for writing to cause her sons to write for their own children and also to encourage other women’s attention to their children’s religious formation (14-17). In the same ambiguous spirit as the text’s status in between public and private, the poem that precedes the text, “Counsell to my Children,” offers a conventional apology for “each misplaced word,” but also includes a metaphor that emphasizes the value of her motherly speech: she, like her sons after her, are the short-lived, industrious bees gathering honey, that “sweet and pleasant wholesome food” contained in her words (A8-A9). Poole has characterized Leigh’s ambiguous social position within her text as “standing in a doorway,” her Puritan leanings predisposing her to public preaching, yet her submissiveness to her departed spouse keeping her figuratively within her household walls (74). As both Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, and Pamela Allen Brown indicate, this doorway stance was a significant posture for neighborhood women’s conversation (208; *Better a Shrew* 38-43), and thus is perhaps an acceptable pose for a woman writer.

Elizabeth Jocelin’s reasons for writing are complicated by her fear of dying in childbirth, a fear not unjustified, as she died in October 1622, shortly after giving birth to

her first child. According to Sylvia Brown, the anonymous “Approbation” that introduces the text was most likely written by Thomas Goad, the chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who licensed Jocelin’s text and probably prepared the manuscript for publication (“Approbation” 129-30). Jocelin presents herself as turning reluctantly to writing because of her fears that death will deprive her of the time necessary to raise her child in the Christian faith and that it also will deprive her child of its mother. She inserts herself bodily into the text in a more prominent way than Leigh does in order to allow the text to figure the missing maternal self. Poole describes Jocelin’s authorial position as more private than Leigh’s: “she does not simply remain within the walls of her own home, but within the very limits of her own body,” what Poole calls “cloistered privacy” (80). Jocelin justifies her decision to record her instructions with the ideas that she “wrote to a Childe,” she wrote “in priuate sort,” and, most importantly, that her “intent was good” (B2v-B3v).

However, Jocelin also describes giving the text to her husband, Tourell, using the legal language of bequest. She claims there is no “fitter hand” to carry out her instructions and names the child as “Executor” and Tourell as “ouerseer” (B3v-B4). This places Jocelin’s words in the curiously dominant position, as the writer of “The Approbation” recognizes, of “*Ouerseer* to her husband” (A2v). Brown claims both that Goad’s editorial changes excise what he apparently saw as a “religiously radical” bent and that Jocelin’s own self-censorship and ambivalence toward her project are much clearer in the manuscript version than in the version Goad later licensed (“Approbation” 134-35, 140). For example, in the British Library manuscript, which contains

emendations in the same hand as the main text, Jocelin amends “if I had eloquence” to “if I had skill to write” (8v), suggesting her sensitivity, as a humble woman, to a claim of rhetorical expertise. Brown also argues that Goad’s use of legal language in the *Approbation* and his appropriation and publication of Jocelin’s text underscore “the precarious legitimacy of Jocelin’s enterprise” since she is still subject to the laws of coverture (““Over Her Dead Body”” 11). While we can’t know Jocelin’s attitude toward the publication of her manuscript and while I don’t wish to dispute the precariousness of her authorial situation, it does seem imperative to note that Goad’s legal language clearly echoes and extends Jocelin’s own usage, indicating the acceptability of a woman advising, indeed overseeing, her husband regarding childcare. Presumably, this text retains its force only as a replacement for the dead wife and mother, no longer *feme covert*. The emendations (both Jocelin’s and Goad’s) and intertextual echoes (between Jocelin and Goad) indicate Jocelin’s simultaneous submissiveness to and control over her husband as well as her sensitivity to both.

Elizabeth Richardson’s *A Ladies Legacie to Her Daughters* was written in manuscript form in 1625, and later expanded to include three books of prayers and published in 1645, several years before Richardson’s death. She says in the introductory letter that the books were originally intended to be personal instruction for her daughters and daughters-in-law, but she decided to publish because she “lately [has been] overperswaded by some that much desired to have them” (3). The second letter, dedicated “to my foure Daughters, Elizabeth, Frances, Anne, and Katherine Ashbournham,” suggests that her prayers and meditations act as dowry, replacing the monetary wealth

she is unable to bestow with spiritual currency (4). Of particular interest is the birth metaphor she uses to describe laboring over her daughters' souls in the writing process:

I know you may have many better instructors then my selfe, yet can you have no true mother but me, who not only with great paine brought you into the world, but do now still travell in care for the new birth of your soules; to bring you to eternal life, which is my chieftest desire, and the height of my hopes: And howsoever this my endeavor may be contemptible to many, (because a womans) which makes me not to joyne my sons with you, lest being men they misconstrue my well-meaning; yet I presume that you my daughters will not refuse your Mothers teaching. . . . (6)

Richardson is careful to distinguish the value of her advice as particularly appropriate for her daughters, though perhaps “contemptible” to her sons, and to place it outside the realm of male experience, and therefore less easily subject to male criticism, by equating her fervent religious instruction with the travail of labor pains.

This birthing analogy supports the powerful role Richardson assumes as intermediary both for her daughters and for her larger audience. For instance, in the first dedicatory letter, she suggests that the worth of her book is specifically in its use under her direction: “let me as a Mother, intreat and prevaile with you to esteem so well of it, as often to peruse, ponder, practice, and make use of this Booke *according to my intention*, though of itself unworthy” (1-2; emphasis added). In “A Petition of the Author for herselfe,” which ends the first book, Richardson goes so far as to compare her calling

to Paul's and to use his discipleship to justify her own religious speech:

O Lord, as Paul said, he would readily performe the duty in his charge that lay upon him, lest while he preached to save others, him self should become a cast-away: so dearest Lord, I having taken pains to compose many Prayers for the use of others (under my care) to further them in the constant performance of this duty of prayer; which being rightly used, will draw many blessings from thee: Almighty God, I humbly beseech thee, to heare and receive their supplications, that call upon thee by these Prayers. (48)

Later, in Book Two, Richardson entreats God to accept her prayers when offered by "my children, grand-children, kindred, friends, or any good Christian that shall peruse them" (51). She seems clearly to envision her role not merely as a mother guiding her daughters, but as a disciple and quasi-Marian intermediary leading all those who make use of her book and her words to God. Her role, though clearly subservient to God, nevertheless recreates a familial dynamic in which her guidance as Mother roughly parallels that of God as Father, placing her in a rhetorical position more powerful than either Jocelin's or Leigh's.

Attitudes toward Marriage and Marital Speech

We don't know why Richardson's legacy was printed only once in comparison with the numerous reprints of both Leigh's and, to a lesser extent, Jocelin's texts.

Possibly, the authoritative speaking position which she claims for herself, pushing the boundaries of the submissive model for women's speech as it does, made some members

of her audience uneasy. However, these mothers' legacies as a group help to illustrate the range of general attitudes toward women's speech that existed in the first half of the seventeenth century, particularly among those women who felt both maternal and religious justification for their writing. Women's attitudes toward marital speech were clearly affected by larger cultural attitudes and also seem to have varied depending upon marital status. As with general attitudes toward women's speech, women's attitudes toward marital speech, as indeed toward marriage, varied widely and seldom were directly stated.

Young women who had never been married previously were probably less comfortable voicing their opinions or preferences regarding marriage than their married or widowed counterparts. Clearly, having less experience of marriage, their notions of it were somewhat unformed. In addition, as expectations for companionate marriage became more common, single women may have felt more comfortable in voicing their views regarding the kind and quality of married life they expected. This, in fact, seems to have been the trend over time. Probably early in 1600, Elizabeth Russell wrote to Thomas Egerton, proposing a match between Egerton and one of her daughters, most likely Bess,¹² and inserting a marginal note regarding her hopes for her daughter's marriage: "I love of lyfe to marry my Daughter to a wise man that will love her and governe her in Iudge ment in the feare of god; according to her worth and in al kyndness and wisdom will deserve her Love. This is what I seeke" (Phillippy). Notably, we have the voice of her powerful and outspoken mother, rather than Bess's own, negotiating a possible marriage based on the husband's affection and respect, and on the wife's

submission. Although secret love letters almost certainly existed in some instances, few records of women's direct involvement in their own marital negotiations from this period have survived, perhaps because incriminating letters were destroyed, either by the recipients or by descendants eager to protect or revise the family honor. About 1610, Jane Skipwith wrote amiably to her cousin Lewes Bagott concerning his father's preference for him of a woman with an ample dowry, rather than herself: "I am very sorry to here that your father is still in that humer of offering you more wifes; but as for this; shee hathe a greate porshone; wich I thinke if I hade; hee would not so much missl[i]ke of mee as hee dothe; and besides shee is honorabell wich dothe goe fare with most men nowe dayes" (Stewart and Wolfe 95). Signing herself "your truly louing frende while I breath," Skipwith remains affectionate, yet not bitter at her loss, accepting of the fact that she is powerless to intervene in any marital arrangements on her behalf.

In contrast, Anne Halkett's memoir, written after her husband's death in 1670, records her affair with Thomas Howard, two years her junior, in 1644. In spite of the fact that she records the incident much later when married to James Halkett, her forthright rejection of Howard's proposal is surprising, given her openness regarding a subsequent lengthy affair with the duplicitous Colonel Bampfield, a secret agent for Charles II, whom she had expected to marry.¹³ In the earlier affair, when Howard pressures her to marry secretly without their parents' consent, the young Anne responds directly and sensibly that she is unwilling to consider such an arrangement: "I told him I could nott butt thinke my selfe much obleeged to him for his good opinion of mee, butt itt would bee a higher obligation to confirme his esteeme of mee by following my advise" (12).

When he continues to push, she promises “that I would nott marry till I saw him first married” even though, as she confesses to the audience of her memoir, “I had noe inclination to marry any” (13). While Halkett’s directness may have been a later revision of her youthful self or a savvy ploy to avoid language that might in any way imply a betrothal,¹⁴ it seems to be more generally characteristic of her speech. She remains, as she tells both Howard and us, “fixt beyond any perswasion” (14), speaking clearly on her own behalf and successfully negotiating a marriage proposal that she sees as unworkable, though not unattractive, without help from family or friends.

Alice Wandesford, on the other hand, seems truly reluctant to wed when her friends propose a match with William Thornton in 1651. Unwilling to give up a comfortable life in her mother’s house that left her free to pursue her religious beliefs, and perhaps secretly fearful of ending up a widow with hungry children to support like her mother, Thornton repeatedly reiterates her earlier opposition to marrying. For instance, she says:

As to myselfe, I was exceedingly sattisfied in that happie and free condition, wherein I injoyed my time with delight abundantly in the service of my God, and the obedience I owed to such an excelent parent. . . . Nor could I, without much reluctance, draw my thoughts to the change of my single life, knowing to much of the caires of this world sufficiently without the addittion of such incident to the married state.

(75)

In spite of these reservations, and after much prayer “that Allmighty God might receive

the glory of my change,” she is more inclined to accept Thornton’s petition (77). However, she tells him “most seriously and candidly,” as she says in a vivid account of their interview, of her steadfast belief in the Church of England (as opposed to his family’s Presbyterianism), even telling him bluntly that she prefers “a single life” (78n). After his assurances that his ideas in religion and government do not conflict with hers, and after promising her that “I should enjoy my owne conscience as I desired,” she finally accepts his proposal (79n). In spite of the fact that their accounts are written years afterward, both Halkett’s and Thornton’s experiences of courtship suggest that, by mid-century, young women were more likely to speak openly about their fears and concerns regarding marriage than they had previously been.

Dorothy Osbourne’s openly affectionate letters to William Temple during their courtship from 1652 to 1654 certainly bear this out. Having first met on the Isle of Wight in 1648, and subsequently separated when Temple’s father objected to their courtship and sent him abroad, they began a correspondence soon after Temple’s return to London that lasted until their marriage on Christmas Day two years later.¹⁵ Osbourne’s early letters to Temple are comfortable and flirting, questioning him about his long absence and teasing him about her various suitors.¹⁶ Although she acknowledges that she speaks without experience, in a letter dated just three weeks after their correspondence begins, she also speaks freely about her preferences in a husband: “’tis true I should bee glad to have him alway’s kinde, and know no reason why hee should bee wearier of being my Master then hee was of being my Servant” (12). She conflates the common master-mistress familial analogy with the servant-mistress topos of Petrarchan love lyrics: her

husband will be *both* master and servant, with a subtle subtext suggesting that as wife she will be both servant and master. James Fitzmaurice and Martine Rey see Osbourne's early letters as offering an "unadorned and direct" style, with an expectation of "kindness" in the sense of "affection based on shared decision-making" (154).

This idea of marital equality is developed further in an undated letter that Smith places in July 1653 in which Osbourne elaborates on what she calls "friendship," but which we would understand as romantic love:

'tis generally beleev'd it owes it's birth to an agreement & conformity of humors, and that it lives no longer then tis preserved by the Mutuall care of those that bred it, tis wholly Governde by Equality, and can there bee such a thing in it, as a distinction of Power? noe sure, if wee are friends wee must both comande & both obay alike. indeed a Mistresse and a Servant, soundes otherwise, but that is Ceremony, and this is truth. (60)

This reality, as Osbourne describes it in opposition to the ideal of the marriage ceremony, is a far cry from the young bride willing to be governed by the older man that we saw in Russell's turn-of-the-century proposal of a match between her daughter and Lord Egerton. Osbourne later describes at some length the perfect husband for her, mostly through the use of negative examples, saying their "humors must agree"; he must not be too countrified, too limited to his books, too much the town gallant, or too fashionable; and "he must Love mee and I him as much as wee are capable of Loveing" (105). Her ability to speak openly to her husband is clearly of primary importance to her. This is evidenced in the length and breadth of discussion of various topics as well as in

one explicit comment she makes a few months before their wedding: “I am apt to speak what I think; and to you have soe accoustumed my self to discover all my heart, that I doe not beleeeve twill ever bee in my power to conceal a thought from you” (173).

Osbourne’s honest, open self-representation is perhaps the defining characteristic of her letters. In a study of the letters’ novelistic features, Sheila Ottway describes Osbourne as “a remarkably astute and articulate young woman who is capable of expressing her own opinions on a wide range of subjects, including love, with eloquence and wit” (“Dorothy Osbourne’s Love Letters” 149). That Temple saved Osbourne’s courtship letters to him in a special cabinet indicates not only their value for him but his lack of opposition to her freedom of expression.¹⁷

The freedom of expression that we begin to see between women and their suitors by mid-century had been the prerogative of widows in earlier generations. Alan Stewart argues that contemporaries were sensitive to the radically discontinuous voices of women in different stages of their lives, suggesting that their voices were doubled by the men who defined their social positions, and that it was not until this double voice was silent that the woman herself was heard (88). He links what he sees as the disparate voices of Anne Bacon as single, married, and widowed, saying “until 1579 [when her husband Sir Nicholas died] we do not hear the voice of Anne Cooke Bacon, but the doubled voice of Anne and whatever man she was translating socially or textually at the time. From 1579 Anne’s voice is heard, independent, for the first time, and it is heard as mad” (89). Unfortunately, Stewart never examines *her* voice, but instead focuses on various male representations and interpretations of it, all dependent upon a fierce battle

with her sons over her financial management of their inheritances. Although Stewart's points about the discontinuous nature of women's voices and the influences that close male family members exerted on women's voices are insightful and helpful, in this instance he seems dismissive of the rhetorical agency that other scholars have identified in widow's correspondence.

For example, Lynne Magnusson's study of Anne Cooke Bacon's correspondence with her sons Anthony and Francis between 1592 and 1597 reveals the power that could accrue to the widow who understood how to manipulate the reception of her epistolary voice, especially if she had financial means. Magnusson says of Bacon: "Her rhetorical sophistication shows itself in a recognition that the struggle for voice, for textual agency, could not be advanced merely by writing better texts or striving for greater learning or enhanced linguistic capital; it must involve a struggle to control or define context, to affect the conditions of the reception of discourse" ("Widowhood" 6). In letters to her private chaplain, Rev. Dr. Elnathan Parr, in 1613, Lady Jane Cornwallis exhibits a considerable level of involvement and control over her second marriage to Nathaniel Bacon, son of Nicholas Bacon, the older half-brother of Anne Cooke Bacon's sons. She is particularly concerned that she is being sought chiefly for her money, although, she says, "they [Sir Nicholas and Lady Anne Butts Bacon] have made it seem other ways to me, in assuring me that it was myself, and not my fortune, which they desired" (61). Parr is assisting in the negotiations for the match, and in this way Lady Jane is attempting to define the context of those negotiations, as Magnusson suggests that Lady Anne does.

In contrast, Elizabeth Russell repeatedly exhibits her reluctance to remarry,

preferring her independence in spite of the financial uncertainties it brought her. An odd postscript to an undated letter to William Cecil, probably written in July 1584 when John Russell died while away from home, speaks wistfully about the hazards of remaining unmarried:

If your lordship hear that I marry, think it not strange, for I live without comfort of any living, God and yourself excepted. All other I find more cumbrous and dangerous than comfortable. But my old man is said to be suddenly dead. I hope it be not so. He was well on Friday after dinner, I received a letter written with his own hand on Saturday, and yet [he was] reported on Tuesday to my Lord / of Northumberland, as his steward told me, to be dead. And that suddenly. (Farber 108-09)

Later, in letters to Robert Cecil, she threatens more than once to remarry to spare herself such inconveniences as a 16£-suit brought against her by a draper's widow and to avoid Cecil's own aggravation at her frequent requests for financial assistance. In one letter (dated by Farber as August 1599), fearful of her inability to defend herself in the event of the rumored Spanish invasion, Russell characterizes herself as a "desolate widow" and promises that if Cecil will give her money for guns and shot, she will "marry and be provided of someone that shall defend me and take care for me living and to bury me." Then, apparently overcome with irritation at her untenable situation, she adds in the margin: "I will take me to a evil mischief and marry to avoid this inconvenience of being killed by villains" (244). Nine years later, when her financial difficulties are even more pronounced and her health more problematic, she writes to Cecil, "I promise if your

Lordship bring me to church I will not challenge any contract from you for a husband, nor bring your Lordship in debt for anything I spend” (353). Her tone here, in this unlikely proposal of a marriage between them, is conciliatory, even affectionate, yet not serious.¹⁸

More revealing, perhaps, are the occasional intimate glimpses we have of married women’s conversations with their husbands. Margaret Hoby’s diary entries of 1599 and 1600, for instance, offer brief snapshots of her lying in bed because of a sore foot or a toothache while conversing with third husband Thomas Posthumous Hoby (son of Lady Russell by first husband Thomas Hoby) or walking and talking with him after dinner (14-15, 65, 47-48). Similarly, we can imagine sporadic, yet comfortable conversation between Anne Clifford and first husband Richard Sackville, as she sits stitching beside him while he reads, based on her diary for August 1616 (97). This affectionate exchange is frequently apparent in women’s correspondence, too, as they share information with their husbands about domestic news and childcare. Based on the surviving letters of Robert Sidney, Barbara Gamage Sidney carried on just such an affectionate correspondence with her husband after their marriage in 1584; unfortunately, her letters to him have not survived (Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan 3, 14). In May 1624, Nathaniel Bacon comments on Lady Jane’s last letter to him with “the abundance of your love therein professed” (115). And in 1653, Anne Finch Conway says to her husband, Edmund, “I could not satisfy my selfe with writing seldome to you” (81). On rare occasions, marital correspondence could even become sexually explicit as with the thinly disguised innuendo Maria Thynne addresses to “her best and sweetest

Thomken,” which includes puns on economic exchange and a distorted Latin pun on the verb *tolles* (you will rise up) (37). Jacqueline Eales’ study of Lady Brilliana Harley’s letters reveals that the character of a woman’s letters to her husband could change over time. Eales describes an initial deference at the start of Harley’s marriage in 1623 to Sir Robert, 20 years her senior, that gradually becomes an intimate and cherished correspondence. For instance, three years into their marriage, Harley describes her delight in writing frequently to her husband: “I am so much pleased with this silent discoursing with you that as I spent part of the morning in this kinde of being with you, so nowe I begine the night with it, and in theas lines reseaue the remembrance of my love of which you have not a part but all” (149).

However, disagreements are also frequently in evidence. Clifford’s diary is particularly prominent in this respect, recording numerous fallings out with Sackville.¹⁹ Occasionally, she notes her specific verbal protests to him, as on 27 May 1619 at Knole, not long after he has openly entertained his mistress in London, when she says, “After supper my Lord and I walked before the gate, where I told him how good he was to everybody else and how ill to me” (178). Important conversations are often conducted by letter, as in April 1616, when Sackville writes a formal request that she sign an agreement giving up her claim to her father’s estates in Westmoreland, and she answers no, also by letter, “what misery soever it brought me” (77). Soon after he writes her that she will be evicted from Knole and that he will take their daughter Margaret away from her. He never enforces the first threat, but Clifford is separated from her young child for several months (79). Setting aside the desire for time apart in the case of couples with

troubled marriages like Clifford and Sackville, the vicissitudes of London politics and the management of multiple estates frequently made dealing with important matters by letter a necessity. Of interest is the suggestion in the diary of Elizabeth Hoby, whose marriage appears to have been at least companionable, that on one particular occasion she responds to a disagreement with her husband in writing while both are at home. On 19 July 1600, she records, ““I wrett an answer to a demand Mr Hoby had giuen me ouer night,” and later in the day she says, she “returned vnto my Clossitt and altered that a litle which before I had written”; however, she refrains from giving him what she’s written until the following evening, on the 20th, and it is never mentioned further (99-100).²⁰ In this case, and perhaps at times in the case of Clifford and Sackville, it would seem that some conversations were simply too unpleasant to be conducted face to face. Writing may have given the speaker greater control over the message, and, particularly in the case of the women, whose speech was more heavily circumscribed, may have allowed them either to feign submissiveness (which seems likely in Hoby’s case) or to adopt a boldness they found difficult to manage face-to-face (a more likely possibility with Clifford).

We do have frequent evidence of women openly disagreeing with their husbands in their correspondence. In a letter dated 1 May 1657, for example, Anne Conway openly argues against her husband’s arrangements for providing horses to convey his letters from Ireland, remarking, “I conceive you take the most troublesome course . . . but if you esteeme it the best I do not except the tediousnesse of it” (142). The letters of Joan Thynne and her daughter-in-law suggest both generations of women could be

openly critical of their husbands (and indeed of their mothers-in-law as well), but that the later generation may have been more outspoken.²¹ A series of three letters between 20 April and 30 May 1595 show Joan attempting to mediate between her husband, John, and her son, Thomas, who in May 1594 had secretly married Maria Audley, granddaughter of a man with whom John Thynne shared considerable personal animosity. In the third letter, Joan recommends an alternative course to one apparently proposed by John, suggesting that Thomas be kept at home under an Oxford tutor, which would also benefit their younger son, John. She is quite direct both in her disagreement and in her belief that she can handle this situation more capably than her husband: “For now this doth but lose his time and all long of [on account of] yourself, which if I might remedy as you may, it should not be as it is” (11). Later in the letter in an apparent nod to the expectation of submissiveness, she adds, “All which I leave to your consideration” (12). Another letter five years afterward reveals her frustration when John views as dishonest a man whom she had sent him to assist with the accounts: “wrong me not so much as to condemn me without just cause of offence, for if I could as well have contented you, I should have thought myself a happy woman. But seeing that I never have nor shall content you, I am and will be contented to do my best endeavors if it please you to esteem of them” (15).

The surviving letters from Maria to her husband register still more frequent and more pointed complaints, often in a decisively sarcastic manner. For instance, in an undated letter that Alison Wall places between 1604 and 1606, Maria complains bitterly of Thomas’ lack of confidence in her abilities to manage the estate:

Well Mr. Thynne (Thyne), believe I am both sorry and ashamed that any creature should see that you hold such contempt of my poor wits, that being your wife, you should not think me of discretion to order (according to your appointment) your affairs in your absence, but if you be persuaded that it is most for your credit to leave me like an innocent fool here, I will the more contentedly bear the disgrace. (32)

Not unlike Joan's earlier conciliatory attempt with John, though, Maria then signs, "Your loving wife, howsoever" (32). Another letter from about the same period is full of sarcastic hyperbole, apparently because Maria is pregnant and confined to Longleat, while Thomas is away enjoying himself. She suggests among other things that she so commends his care of his hunting dogs that she will allow them to relieve themselves in his bed when he next overfeeds them. In fact, the letter is full of the language of digestion and defecation, indicating her extreme dissatisfaction. Regarding her pleas that he wait until he is at home to settle an issue between her cousin Stantor and one of Thomas' servants, she says, "I will not entreat too earnestly because I know thou art choleric with me ever in these cases, but though thou doth many times call me fool for yielding to the enticing of fair words, yet if you mark it, I have never yet craved anything of such great importance as hath ever been prejudicial to your reputation or profit" (33). She counters what she sees as his negative image of her with an image of the ideal wife by claiming assiduous management of his estate and reputation. In a subsequent letter, probably written the year before her death in childbirth in 1611, she tries a similar strategy (and, I might add, fails miserably to be convincing): "My best Thomken I know

thou wilt say (receiving two letters in a day from me) that I have tried the virtue of aspen leaves under my tongue [a common proverb recommends this cure], which makes me prattle so much, but consider that all is business, for of my own natural disposition I assure thee there is not a more silent woman living than myself” (48).

Alison Wall claims that both Thynne women “managed a marital balance” between deference and defiance, but suggests that they at times merely followed deferential formulas rather than expressing their actual feelings (“Deference and Defiance” 81, 90). The pattern, perhaps more pronounced with Maria than with Joan, is a self-aware defiance of culturally acceptable rules of conduct smoothed over with a deferential phrase or image and, especially in Maria’s case, with open affection. Alice Thornton follows a similar pattern half a century later in a letter to her husband dated 18 October 1664, in which she attempts to dissuade him from a trip to London that she believes will be hazardous to his health. She ends her argument:

Now, most deare husband, I beseech you lett not my request seem strange or be despised in your sight, since I never before desired your forbearance in what might seeme for your advantage. Indeed, I should not have taken upon me this freedom, but am much presed thereto upon the account of my endeared affection (and teares more then common for your welfare), as allso being bound in duty to God and each other to watch over one another for good. . . . I have now put myselfe upon your candid interpretation, who am indeed unworthy to give you any advice, but to present this to your serious consideration that this jorney may prove

somewhat fatall to our injoyments. (292)

Thornton uses more submissive posturing than either Thynne woman, emphasizing her fear of angering her husband, her extreme emotion, and their united interests and wellbeing. Nevertheless, she reemphasizes her argument by repeating it in the final sentence of her letter.

Perhaps the most direct and revealing statement of a woman's attitudes toward marriage and marital speech are attributed to Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton, Countess of Bridgewater, who with her sister, Jane Cavendish, had earlier authored a manuscript collection including poetry and the drama *The Concealed Fancies*, examined further in Chapter VII. According to the title page of the bound manuscript, Egerton's loose papers were collected and transcribed sometime after her death in 1663, but we have no knowledge of the date of composition of individual items within the volume. Two short essays, seemingly out of place amongst Egerton's prayers and meditations, focus directly on marriage. In "Considerations concerning Marriage," Egerton immediately concedes that "there is an obedience must belong from the wife to the Husband" because of his superior reason and because God commands it (78v). However, she couches this discussion in terms of friendship and companionship, and further suggests that happiness in marriage is certainly possible if the woman values the judgment of her partner. She specifically encourages women to speak freely and openly to their husbands, saying a wife should "not . . . be in such awe of him [her husband], as a servant of his Master, as not to speake, to contradict the least word he saith, but to have an affection, and to love him, as to a friend, and so to speake their mind, and opinion freely to him, yet not value

him y^e lesse” (79v-80). She goes on to posit several marital relationships that are bound to fail, including those in which the wife is meek, willful, or overly fanciful and those in which the husband is hasty or fickle (80-82v). The majority of the relationships she examines hinge on spoken interaction: positive marital relationships allow open speech and constructive silence, while negative marital interactions involve “troublesome” speech and “undigested words” (80v, 81). Thus, wifely obedience is not equal merely to silence, nor even to submissiveness, but to considerate, mutually responsive verbal communication.

“Of Marriage and Widdowes” also conceives the marital relationship as the wife’s submission to both God’s will and the husband’s authority, yet here Egerton hints clearly that the marital yoke may chafe:

we are assured that our God is gracious and he knew we might serve him,
though he commanded us to obey a Husband, for God is never unjust, to
sett us a task w^{ch} we can not performe; for though ‘tis an action hard to
understand, by our blind and dull apprehension, yet if he commands it, he
enables us to performe what is his pleasure; so let us not beleeve God
would put an affliction upon us instead of a blessing. . . . (84v-85v)

She presents obedience to a husband as a frequently incomprehensible and difficult task, yet emphasizes it as commanded by God, rather than any earthly (or husbandly) authority, and ultimately bringing God’s blessings. Further, her repeated use of the verb “performe” may signal her awareness of the performative aspects of being a wife, of seeming to obey in order to maintain marital harmony. As Betty Travitsky

acknowledges, these essays “open a highly unusual window on the thinking of seventeenth-century woman” (“Egerton”).

The Fluidity of Public and Private in Marital Speech and Writing

Given the prevailing expectation in the period that women remain relatively sheltered in the domestic world, an intriguing aspect of women’s marital speech as exhibited in their surviving first-person writings is its tendency to bridge the fluid boundary between the public and private realms. Linda Pollock explains this fluidity as a function of the common analogy between family and state, although she claims that the perceived lack of separation frequently served to intensify attempts at secrecy in order to protect the family (90). The site most often associated with privacy in recent critical discussions is the early modern closet, relevant here as the site where most women (and, indeed, most men) read and wrote letters, and recorded their devotions or memoirs. The exact nature of the privacy afforded women by their closets has been the subject of some debate, with some viewing it as a negative space of containment, closely associated with women’s weak physical and spiritual natures, and others seeing it as a positive, potentially empowering site.²²

Nevertheless, letters and diaries frequently served as liminal sites that brought narratives of the outside world into the privacy of women’s closets. Occasionally, this took the form of women’s interventions in other households, often those of extended family, as in the case of Dorothy Bacon’s letter that describes intervening, with her husband’s permission, in her sister’s abusive marriage (O’Day 134). In an undated letter by Elizabeth Russell to Lord Willoughby, probably written between 1596 and 1598,

Russell attempts to mediate in a dispute between Willoughby and his wife, especially praising Lady Willoughby's attempts to speak highly of him to Queen Elizabeth (Phillippy). At times, women report their attempts to participate in their husband's business or political affairs, with varying degrees of success. Ann Fanshawe records an incident early in her marriage to Richard, Secretary of War to Prince Charles (later Charles II), in which a distant cousin convinces her that inquiring into her husband's business affairs is "fashionable." After she repeatedly presses Richard about what news the prince has sent and is repeatedly, if patiently, rebuffed, he finally tells her that his honor demands allegiance to the prince. As a result, she says, "until the day of his death I never thought fit to aske him any business, but that he communicated freely to me" (116). Later, however, when Richard is taken prisoner after the Battle of Worcester in 1651 and is taken ill in captivity, she successfully intercedes with Parliamentary leaders to obtain his liberty upon bail (135). Women frequently share both political as well as domestic discussion in letters to their husbands. For instance, according to Eales, Brilliana Harley wrote frequently to her husband when he was absent from home due to his parliamentary duties (145). In addition, Vivienne Larminie's study of the letters of Anne Newdigate exposes that lady's role in maintaining and improving her family's social standing through her letter writing (96-97).

One common way in which women's private or domestic speech entered the public realm was in their handling of legal and business matters, either for ill or absent husbands, or as widows. As previously mentioned, Katherine Paston conducted legal business on behalf of her husband as his health declined. She speaks intelligently and

competently of a lawsuit involving her husband's inheritance in a letter of 20 January 1620 to brother-in-law Sir John Heveningham, referring to her husband as "the playntiff" (52-53). In 1628, the year after her husband's death, Jane Bacon complains to her brother-in-law Edmund Bacon of the "unkind token" he sent with his last letter: a subpoena for his debts to be settled out of his father's estate, which would include Culford House, previously settled on Nicholas to cement the marriage to Jane (179). Elizabeth Russell's letters offer abundant evidence of her legal and business acumen. In 1571, in between her marriages to Hoby and Russell, for instance, she writes to William Cecil regarding repairs of the bridge and mill at Evesham (Farber 86). In 1593, she writes to both Robert and William Cecil regarding the lawsuit over her husband's Bedford inheritance, revealing her legal knowledge, and offering accurate financial figures to detail her daughters' potential losses if the suit is not settled in their favor (128-31, 134-36). During the same period, she writes a forceful letter to Judge Francis Gawdy, complaining bitterly of Gawdy's arrest of one of her servants subsequent to an incident in which she imprisoned two of her neighbor's men in stocks because they had treated her lewdly. She says, "I woold yow shoold know it, I care as litle for *yowr fyne*, *prowd ri gor* as *yowr self*; who wallow in welth." The metaphor she uses to describe the violation of her sensibilities is particularly feminine, recalling as it does the gendered space of the childbed. She describes what she sees as Gawdy's inappropriate response to the situation as "the Force of *yowr [crab] bed* mighty mallice, the [**Com**]ing wherof is [as whole] unknowne to me, as to *the Chyld new borne*" (Phillippy). She also writes to Thomas Egerton in 1597 to thank him for hearing her son Edward's suit in Star Chamber

and to ask him to be the overseer of her will (Phillippy).

More sensational than widows' not uncommon interventions in law and politics were the cases in which marital difficulties became decidedly public. Two such notable cases are recorded in the diaries of Anne Clifford and the letters and petitions of Elizabeth Cary, both of whom violated their husbands' authority and brought their marital disagreements into court circles. Clifford apparently kept diaries throughout her life, but only two copies of her 1616 to 1619 diaries have survived.²³ Katherine Acheson believes that the diaries were "not destroyed by Clifford herself, but by her descendants" (*Memoir* 37), suggesting, perhaps, familial censorship of her outspokenness. The diary is remarkable for its frankness about her relationship with husband Richard Sackville, as we have already seen, at times tense and uncomfortable, and at other times intimate and loving. Also of particular interest, and perhaps the reason that this portion of Clifford's diaries was retained, is that it documents the progress of her suits to retain the titles and lands of her father's inheritance.²⁴ In addition, the diary documents Clifford's outspokenness and her steadfast refusal to obey her husband's wishes in settling the suits regarding her inheritance.

In February 1616, Clifford records her mood as "sometimes merry and sometimes sad, as I heard news from London" regarding her suits and Sackville's pressure for her to agree to the court decision that divided the ancestral lands between Clifford and her uncle Francis (65). On the following day, Clifford records being pressed for an hour and a half by the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot, a family friend whom Sackville has recruited in his cause, to agree to the settlement. This interview

occurs in the presence of “a great company of men of note,” including Sackville’s uncle and younger brother, and Clifford’s cousin, all of whom oppose her position. She steadfastly refuses to agree to anything until she consults her mother, saying, “my answer to his Lordship was that I would do nothing till my Lady and I had conferred together.” At that point, the other men are employed to coerce her. She pointedly notes their manipulations: “Much persuasion was used by him and *all the company*, sometimes terrifying me and sometimes flattering me” (71; emphasis added). Not only does Clifford refuse to recognize her husband’s authority in this matter, she verbally opposes an array of male authority figures and eventually is given leave to make arrangements to confer with her mother in Westmoreland and provide a response within two months. Clifford seems entirely cognizant both of the risk her obstinacy poses to her marriage and also of the negative way in which it is perceived by others. She rejoices the next day that Sackville has not left her because, as she says, “it was generally thought that I must either have sealed to the agreement or to have parted with my Lord” (71).

Over the months that follow, Clifford refuses to sign the agreement and faces increasing bullying from Sackville, who uses both their two-year old daughter, Margaret, and Anne’s jointure as pawns to force a financially favorable settlement. Finally, the matter comes before King James I in two successive interviews on 18 and 20 January 1617. The first interview is a private one, with only the king, Sackville, and Clifford in attendance. Although Sackville agrees to let the king decide the matter, Clifford, perhaps emboldened by the Queen’s warning “to take heed of putting my matters absolutely to the King lest he should deceive me,” remains resolute (110). Still kneeling in submission

to royal authority, she records, “I beseeched His Majesty to pardon me for that I would never part with Westmorland while I lived upon any condition whatsoever.” As in the interview with the Archbishop, she remains firm in spite of both “fair” and “foul” words from the king to negotiate a settlement. She also records her gratefulness to Sackville, “for he was far kinder to me in all these businesses than I expected” (111).

Like the Archbishop’s use of influential friends and family members to pressure Clifford, the second interview with James is an attempt to break Clifford’s resolve, with 11 men in addition to Sackville in attendance, only one of them—Clifford’s lawyer—ostensibly on her side. As before, although her husband, uncle Francis Clifford, and cousin Henry Clifford all agree to whatever the King’s decides, Clifford is again verbally defiant: “but I would never agree to it without Westmorland at which the King grew into a great chaff, my Lord of Pembroke and the King’s solicitor speaking much against me” (113-15). Again, she does not attempt to record her actual speech in this instance, but she indicates the firmness of her resolve by phrases such as “they saw there was no other remedy” (115). Sackville then asks diplomat Sir John Digby to confer with Clifford privately so that she will not be publicly disgraced by continuing to disobey the king. But she again refuses to yield, prompting James’ decision to come to an agreement with the other parties without her. Although she clearly portrays herself as the heroine in this battle, the lone woman against a field of formidable male opponents whom she takes pains to name specifically, she attributes her success in “pass[ing] over this day so well as I thank God I have done” to “God’s providence” and to the “worth and nobleness of my Lord’s disposition” (115). However, her pride in surviving this interview seems to

result also from not being forced to verbalize a capitulation to terms that are highly objectionable to her. Katharine Hodgkin comments on the importance of lineage to Clifford: “To have given up the lands that went with her family would have amounted to confessing herself not the true heir and descendant of that family, in effect a denial of her own identity” (150). Thus, her speech in these instances, her stubborn refusal to bow to both husband and king, becomes a highly public self-affirmation.

Like Clifford’s defiant speech against husband and king, Elizabeth Cary’s profession of Catholicism in November 1626 is a speech act that defies her husband and ultimately forces her to bring her marital disputes before Charles I’s Privy Council for mediation. Heather Wolfe, editor of Cary’s letters, claims that “conversion was seen as an act of unfaithfulness to one’s husband and country, a mental unfaithfulness which made the husband a far greater cuckold than if his wife were physically unchaste” (18). Henry Cary, Lord Falkland, responded to his wife’s conversion vehemently, turning her out of his household, cutting her off financially, and attempting to limit her contact with their children. Charles was sympathetic to Lady Falkland; he himself had a Catholic queen, the French Henrietta Maria, and he viewed Cary’s conversion as a far greater threat to her husband than to himself as king (21-22). Because as a Catholic she was “forbidden the court,”²⁵ as Cary puts it in a 1627 letter to Lord Conway (300), Wolfe depicts her as forced to earn sympathy through her words:

She countered her husband’s steady onslaught of accusations with her own, less damning account of her conversion. Her sharply-worded pleas to the king and members of the Privy Council, a combination of

deliberative rhetoric and subtle wryness, of genuine submission and stubborn resistance, stressed her right to a clear conscience and her obedience both to her husband and the King. While much of her rhetoric was formulaic, her deviations from convention are noteworthy. The untidiness of her letters, and the corrections made to them in her own hand, suggest that Lady Falkland's first drafts were also her final drafts, their spontaneity undampened by redrafting or by the use of an amanuensis. (32)

In spite of Cary's active correspondence in her own behalf and Charles's sympathy, she never received the allowance proposed by the king.

With the exception of a letter from Cary to her husband, received by him in December 1626, partially abstracted and enclosed in a letter he sent to Sir John Coke, no correspondence between the two survives.²⁶ However, the extent of Henry Cary's anger and resentment regarding his wife's conversion and her attempts to appease him and to justify her actions are seen in the active correspondence each conducted with others, particularly between 1625 and 1630. Henry had been Lord Deputy of Ireland since 1622, and his wife quickly identified Lord Edward Conway, secretary of state in charge of affairs in Ireland, as a potential ally at court. She also turned on at least one occasion to female correspondents for succor, writing for support to Susan Villiers Feilding, Lady Denbigh, who reportedly revealed the secret of Cary's conversion by informing her brother George, Duke of Buckingham (266-67). In turn, Henry actively promoted his view of their marital rift in his correspondence with Conway and other court officials,

including Secretary of State Coke and Henry's agent at court, Leonard Welstead.

Henry Cary consistently portrays his wife as troublesome, incapable, and malicious. When in late 1625, Cary, who had returned to England a few months earlier with the younger children, attempted to assist her husband in his pleas for increased funding in Ireland, Henry characterizes her actions as an "Acte of duty" and calls her "a poore weake woeman" in need of protection in his absence (253). In addition, he chides Conway for his attentions to her, complaining that "shee begins to conceyue hir selfe some hable body in Courte by *your* Countenance" (252). Not long after, on 5 April 1626, he thanks Conway for approving his wife's "good affection to hir husband" but disparages "hir habilitys in Agencye of Affaryres," especially as women's "ouerbusye Natures" make them unsuited for such tasks (256). As he had suggested in an earlier letter, he reiterates that he would prefer her to retire to the country estate of her mother, Lady Tanfield, rather than attempting to procure him favors at court—and, presumably, rather than consorting with Jesuits. After her conversion is made public, Henry is still disparaging, but his tone changes radically, suddenly inflected with inflammatory anti-Catholic rhetoric. For instance, in his letter to Charles I on 8 December 1626, he refers to his wife as "the Apostate hirselle," whom "I have long vnhappily called Wife," and uses biblical references to support his contention that her actions are political, not merely domestic or religious, finally begging the king to confine her to Lady Tanfield's estate (268-69, 270). Later in the same month, he depicts Elizabeth as a "serpent" that he has "nourishe[d]" at his bosom in a letter to Coke, enclosing the abstracted fragment of her letter to illustrate the extent of her casuistry (271). On 5 July 1627, to Conway, he

similarly accuses her of “serpentine subtlety” and “Romishe hipocrisy” in her letter to Charles, the substance or perhaps a copy of which apparently was given him by Conway. As with his earlier equation of Cary with a serpent, he uses stereotypical anti-Catholic insults in describing her offensive behavior, emphasizing in particular her deceptive nature: “what semblancyes cann she not putt on, and what oblique wayes will shee not walk in” (292).

Elizabeth, perhaps in a studied attempt at submission or perhaps entirely sincerely, comes across more reasonably in her earliest letters. In a letter to Conway most likely written a few months after her conversion, she refuses to go to her mother’s, as Charles has requested, because her mother refuses to take her, instead asking to live near Lady Newburgh in Essex with provisions from her husband. She claims to have “committed no fault” and says, “if I haue done amisse, in any thinge, but ~~change~~ in the suposed fault, of changinge my religion, I will bee content, to suffer in the highest degree” (273, 275). Her revision—presumably amending “changing my religion” to emphasize it as a “*suposed* fault” (italics mine)—is instructive of her considered use of language to create sympathy and to mitigate her disobedience toward her husband. She uses similar strategies in a letter to Charles dated 18 May 1627, in which she begs him to rescind his command sending her to her mother and describes herself as near starvation. She asks that he not believe her so foolish as to use conversion as a means for promotion at court and asks, as before, to be allowed to live near her sister-in-law Barrett, Lady Newburgh (284). Her conversion is portrayed as unavoidable, a matter of conscience: “I desire nothinge, but a quiet life, and to reobtaine my lords fauor, which I haue done

nothinge to loose, but what I coulde not with a safe conscience, leaue undone” (284). In conclusion, she asks him to command a weekly allowance for her “till my lord, may haue time, to understand, how things are, and to send his directions” (284). In Elizabeth’s presentation, religious conscience trumps wifely obedience, a notion not uncommon later among some Protestant sects, as we have seen.

That her portrayal of the marital relationship is in conflict with Henry Cary’s and most likely with the normative view of marriage at the time is apparent in Cary’s April 1630 petition to the Privy Council, in which she requests that Henry be forced to pay her debts and provide her an allowance. Her language is particularly instructive:

The ladye Falklands humble desire is that her Lord wilbe pleased to take her into the Communion of his life fortunes, with paying such debts as haue growne due for necessities since the taking of her Children from her, and treating her as a loving husband ought to doe and treat his wife: Or otherwise that she maye obtayne the effectuall performance of the Orders already made by his Maiestie. . . . (356)

Pointing out that Henry has taken her children immediately before asking him to treat her as a loving husband should is consciously ironic and serves as an effective rhetorical ploy to reveal his dereliction of husbandly duty without specifically naming it. Similarly, she places herself rather than Henry as subject of the clause “that she maye obtayne the effectuall performance of the Orders already made,” rather than more boldly and directly stating that Henry should comply with Charles’s previous commands. In addition, her choice of the word “communion” seems oddly resonant here, given the elevated status of

that sacrament within the Catholic rite. Yet, at the same time, her diction also manages to convey that her husband lacks the sacramental view of marriage that she possesses. In some sense her request is about maintaining status; she says she wants to “be able to lyve somthing like her lords wife and heyre to her fathers estate” (356). Yet her subsequent revelation of her reliance on charity to survive undercuts issues of status and implies that it is not unreasonable to be excused from wifely duties—to be merely “somthing like her lords wife” rather than her lord’s wife—when her husband has neglected so grossly his responsibilities to her. Finally, she adopts a submissive pose to both husbandly and court authority in asking to be spared appearing before Council because “vuwilling to appeare in any place to oppose her lord, and as vuwilling to appoint any bodye to that purpose, thinking it vnmeet to confront him” (357). Of course, communicating in writing with both her husband and the court allows Cary greater control over her voice and her presentation.

Women’s Letters as Embodied Speech

Cary’s use of letters and petitions to resolve her private differences with her husband in a more public forum hints at another important facet of women’s lifewriting: the prominence of letters as embodied speech. Not only does Cary insert images of her bodily self in her letters, she frequently calls attention to her letters as signifying her body, particularly her voice. Wolfe suggests that Cary consciously crafts “her written words” to supply her place at court, “substituting for her forbidden body” (35-36). In an early letter to Conway, for instance, Cary comments that “a letter may bee lesse troublesome to your *lordship*, then my presence” (250). Somewhat later, in August 1627,

still having obtained no relief from Henry and relying on friends whom she says are already in distress, Cary presses him to be her “solicitor,” specifically acknowledging her embodiment in the words upon the paper: “I can not follow you, otherwise, then by letter, both for want of a coach, and besides, because I am forbidden the court” (300). In addition, on more than one occasion, Cary uses the phrase “I speake it not, to taxe you,” indicating the deferential posture she consciously adopts in order to increase receptiveness to her pleas, but also indicating the remarkable fluidity between speech and writing in the period.²⁷ I would take Wolfe’s argument one step further and say that Cary’s letters substitute not only for her forbidden body, but for her forbidden voice.

Schneider has examined the common rhetoric that fuses writing and orality in early modern letters. Both male and female letter writers employed conventions that allowed letters to retain the force of face-to-face communication and to be received in “imaginative sympathy,” thus making letter writing a mode of what he terms “affecting correspondence,” even engendering at times a “sense of communion” with the other (32-33, 56-57). Drawing on Erasmus’ *De conscribendis epistolis*, letters were commonly seen as an outward display of inner emotion, and physical actions were frequently inscribed in letters to provide the bodily cues needed to convey emotion (33-35). Love letters, of course, offer numerous examples. Women’s letters also embodied their selves in other surprising ways, as when Maria Thynne enclosed a lock of her red hair under the seal of a letter dated 15 September 1601 to her mother-in-law, Joan, to prove her “unspotted innocence” in her supposed entrapment of Thomas into marriage (21). In addition, women letter writers read their correspondents’ physical bodies in the letters

they received. Elizabeth Russell equates Robert Cecil's letter not just with his handwriting, but with his corporeal hand, when she begins, "I pray, let me have your holy hand—your letter I meant" in a letter regarding the settling of the jointure for her daughter Anne's marriage (Farber 283).

But for a woman the corporeal presence of her body in her written words was more complex and problematic than for a male writer, as we have already seen in the justifications for writing offered by authors of mothers' legacies. Because both her body and, in particular, her voice were subjected to greater scrutiny and circumscription than the male's, expressions of embodiment in women's lifewriting may differ in meaning from those used by male writers. For example, Alice Thornton records her pleasure at finding and copying the book her father had written for her elder brother George:

Haveing, in the best manner I could, writ downe, for the use of my children, the mercys of God to preserve the copy of this excelent father of our family in memory amongst us the blessing we injoyed in his life, and wherein he immitated the great father of the faithful, Abraham, to instruct and teach his house and children in the waies of God, and to command us by his holy writeings, a pledge of his lasting love and caireof our precious soules to all posterities, not only of us, but even of many more good people. (191)

The book is presented as a copy not just of the father's words, but of the father himself, provided to instruct his son and others in the ways of his faith. Since her father's book is a spur to her writing, Thornton perhaps sees her book also as a copy of herself. However,

her autobiography serves not only to instruct her children, but to defend her from criticism—criticism directed specifically at her gendered body. Now widowed, she attempts to justify her censure of her husband's poor financial management. She also complains of her distress regarding “those which had a secret hatred against me” (perhaps her nephew's wife) and who spread the rumor that her illnesses are faked (166-67). Thornton's words thus function, at least in part, as proof of her bodily challenges. The specific event that precipitates her writing the first of three manuscript books of her autobiography is even more graphically related to the body. She begins her task when a hen that she had saved as a young chick pecks at her eye, blinding her for six weeks (271-73). With no external vision, she relies on her inner vision to begin to tell her story.

Ann Fanshawe not only creates a self autobiographically as Thornton does, but she also shares an incident in which she must rewrite herself by changing her name. Attempting in 1659 to leave London with three children and two servants to join her husband, who had been released on bail by Cromwell eight years earlier and finally has procured his liberty after Cromwell's death, she is denied a pass to leave London. Depressed but not defeated, Fanshawe relies upon “invention” and pretends, “in as plain a way and speech as I could device,” to be a young merchant's wife, offering her maiden name, Anne Harrison (138). She then puts ink to paper and revises the pass: “with a penne I made the great *H* of Harrison 2ff, and the 2 *rr*'s an *n*, and the *i* an *s*, and the *s* an *h*, and the *o* an *a*, and the *n* a *w*, so completely that none could find out the change” (138). Fanshawe in this fashion rewrites her maiden self, reinscribing her married identity in letters, first on the pass, which enables her successful departure, and then

again in the retelling of her memoir.

The conscious use of body imagery in the letters of Lady Arbella Stuart is a further case in point regarding how much higher the stakes could be for women in representing the self in writing. In 1603, disgraced at court, frustrated in her attempt to independently arrange a marriage to Edward Seymour, and, consequently, a virtual prisoner in the home of her grandmother, Elizabeth Talbot, Stuart created a fictional lover in order to goad Elizabeth into proposing a match for her. On 9 March, Stuart wrote to Sir Henry Brounker, who had been sent by Robert Cecil to investigate her claims, complaining of her ill treatment by Elizabeth. The letter is lengthy, rambling, and frequently difficult to follow, like others she wrote from Hardwick Hall in this period and that editor Sara Jayne Steen has characterized as similar to twentieth-century freewriting (*Letters* 37). However, one feature that stands out as particularly feminine and as characteristic of Stuart's language in other letters is the needlework metaphor employed to distinguish her "poeticall fiction," as she had earlier called it, from the gossip of others (140). She complains that the explanation of her behavior Brounker has presented to Her Majesty, based on others' reports, is "a mishapen discouloured peece of stuffe . . . so tossed up and downe that it hath almost lost the glosse, and even by the best slubbred up in such hast that many wrong stitches of unkindnesse must be picked out which nedd not have binne so bestowed and many wrong placed conceits ript out" (166). In contrast, she says, she must "shape my owne cote according to my cloth, but it shall not be after the fashion of this world god willing but fitt for me" (166). She returns again to this metaphor at the end of the letter, as she continues to defend the "device" of her

lover and her reticence to be entirely open with Brounker, and with Elizabeth: “these pleites and foldes and slight devises [in others’ reports] do but glitter in the ey and theyr small value is discerned who soever make them worne for fashion shade. whereas mine shall be strange, and new and richly worth more then I am worth” (174). Here, her imaginative means of escape from a repressive situation is akin to the finest needlework of her own devising. In a later letter to Lady Jane Drummond, Stuart’s cousin and attendant to Queen Anna, written in the summer of 1610, she offers “this peece of my worke” (apparently a pair of gloves) to be presented to the Queen “in remembrance of the poore prisoner hir Majesties most humble servant that wrought them in hope those Royall hands will vouchsafe to wear them” (245). Here, Stuart clearly equates her sewing with her writing, the careful crafting of the letter (with three versions extant) suggesting that the letter itself is also her “worke.”²⁸

If, as Steen suggests, this picture of Stuart at her needlework “incorporates the vision of the ideal, submissive female” (“Fashioning” 88), then Stuart’s letters, too, should be viewed as constructing the ideal, submissive female writer. The letters involving her secret marriage in June 1610 to William Seymour, and their separate imprisonment by James I, illustrate Stuart’s considered use of this submissive female persona. In an undated letter to Seymour, likely from that summer and perhaps never delivered, Stuart speaks of Rachel’s weeping at the loss of her children and of her concern for Seymour’s reported ill health, suggesting that her words substitute for tears, a fluid gendered particularly feminine in the period. Although certainly anguished that he apparently has not attempted to communicate with her, she deferentially (if ironically)

expresses concern that she troubles her husband with “so long a letter” when he has been unable to write (242). Her correspondence with James I during her imprisonment frequently draws attention to her prostrate body. In an undated petition, for example, she depicts herself on her knees before him, her heart pure and “Loyall” (247). In a fragment of a letter to James, usually taken to be from spring 1611, she uses a similar, though more anguished, image, saying “the most wretched and unfortunate creature that ever lived prostrates it selfe at the feet of the most mercifull King that ever was desiring nothing but mercy and favour” (260).

In April or May 1611, Stuart drafted several versions of a letter to James in which she requests more time to recuperate before being sent north to Durham, as James had commanded. Perhaps pretending illness, but also quite possibly suffering from one of her recurrent attacks of acute intermittent porphyria, an hereditary enzyme deficiency, Stuart begged for an additional month to recover before being moved away from London, all the while planning an escape to Calais with Seymour.²⁹ Each successive draft of this letter works to lay her bodily infirmities before James and create a sympathetic picture of her suffering. The first draft begins with the “many heavy crosses” she bears, suggesting her physical burdens as well as the emotional and political burden she names of the loss of James’s favor (263). The second adds her “<extreame> weaknesse,” with “extreame” as an insertion before the noun (264). By the final version, Stuart also adds to these earlier images of her infirm body that of her “obedyent hart” (underlined in the manuscript) and her “bludd,” which she subtly reminds him is also his own (266). One clause—“not willing that I might be thought guiltie of hastning my

owne death by anie voluntarie action of myne”—is removed, presumably as too suggestive of her willful disobedience (265). Rather than evoking the submissive prostration of the earlier letters, this one carefully crafts an abject mortal illness that only James can cure by returning Stuart to favor. Her references to crosses, bodily weakness, and blood would hint at herself as a Christ-like sacrifice, placing James in the flattering position of God as heavenly healer.

Particularly telling, however, are the marginal annotations of the final version that reveal Stuart’s anger and hostility toward James and toward her situation. For instance, next to the phrase “the dutie I owe you as my Sovereigne” in the main text, the marginal note reads, “I take it to bee more than I owe by my allegiance to be separated from my husband.” Next to a comment about James’ grace is noted sarcastically, “what man of grace this is I cannot guess.” Beside the offer of her obedient heart is the following observation: “he hath hadd better profe[r]s [*of*] then this and as thoughe none but this would serve” (266; insertion of missing letter in *profers* by Steen, with “of” deleted in manuscript). Steen argues that Stuart’s letters as a whole, and these marginal notes in particular, reveal a considerable gap between the theory and practice of submissive women. She believes that even though Stuart “chafed at” the submissive role, she felt it politically expedient to fashion “a self she thought would be more acceptable to a misogynist king and his court than her unreformed one ever could be” (“Fashioning” 95). Stuart’s marginal comments on her own voice in her letter to James are a potent reminder of the posturing necessarily involved in communication, particularly for women in this period. Steen says elsewhere, “What we hear in Stuart’s

letters is not a single voice from which we can straightforwardly, magically reconstruct the historical woman, but multiple voices, as Stuart enacts varied social and political roles—the imperious claimant, the deferential woman, the entertaining niece, the canny negotiator, the unjustly imprisoned citizen” (“Behind the Arras” 237). We would do well to remind ourselves of this multiplicity in all lifewriting of the period. The selves women put forward in writing were always necessarily plural, enacting multiple familial, social, and political roles, spanning many moods and entire lifetimes. We simply cannot take women’s voices in their letters and memoirs at face value, nor can we see their voices as fixed and absolute. However, we can come closer to understanding the lives and voices of these women by attending carefully to the possibilities available to them for voicing their ideas and opinions.

Theater’s Influence

In addition to expressing themselves in their correspondence and other lifewriting, one avenue of expression that had inescapable influence on many women in the period was the theater. Women were an important part of play-going audiences. In a list of 249 known playgoers between the opening of the first commercial theaters in 1567 and their closure in 1642, Andrew Gurr lists 32 women of varying social classes and marital statuses, slightly less than 13% of the total (224-46).³⁰ Gurr acknowledges this sample of known attendees to be too small to be statistically accurate, especially given his conservative estimate of about 50 million tickets sold at commercial playhouses over the course of the period (69). He concludes that citizens’ wives attended regularly throughout the period. The attendance of ladies at the Globe increased after

1600, he says, at about the same time that their presence there was viewed less explicitly as adulterous, but by the 1620s they attended almost exclusively at indoor halls like Blackfriars (76). Gurr's analysis does not include women's numerous opportunities to attend private dramatic performances, which included but were by no means limited to court masques, or to see plays enacted in dramatic venues outside London. For instance, Clifford, whom we know danced in several court masques, records in her diary for January 1617 seeing a court performance of John Fletcher's *The Mad Lover*, as if this were not an unusual occurrence for her. A few days later, she also records standing in a box with Lady Ruthven to see a masque (109). Elizabeth Cary's daughter memorializes her mother's fondness for plays in her biography of her mother, saying, "After her lord's death she never went to masques nor plays, not so much as at the court, though she loved them very much, especially the last extremely" (224).

We know from other mentions of playgoing that women frequently attended performances in groups, particularly in the company of other women. Mary Boyle Rich notes in her diary that her brother Francis's new wife, Elizabeth Killegrew Boyle, "entic[ed] me to spend (as she did) her time in seeing and reading plays and romances" (160). Though Rich claims to have later regretted this activity as "vain and foolish," the heavily romantic bent of her diary belies this claim to matronly piety (160). Anne Halkett records a similar experience of attending the theater with other women:

I loved well to see plays. . . . And I was the first that proposed and practiced itt, for 3 or 4 of us going together without any man, and every one paying for themselves by giving the mony to the footman who waited

on us, and hee gave itt in the play howse. And this I did first upon hearing some gentlemen telling what ladys they had waited on to plays and how much itt had cost them, upon which I resolved none should say the same of mee. (11)

The independently-minded Halkett, who, like Rich, was probably frequenting playhouses in the late 1630s or early 1640s, wanted to free herself of being beholden to a male escort and perhaps also to increase her opportunities for frequenting the theater. A later reference in her memoir to two gentlemen who ignore her until they see that Charles II favors her includes a pointed reference to John Fletcher's *The Humorous Lieutenant* (54).

Women also had the opportunity to experience plays by reading them. Clifford's Great Picture, now at Appleby Castle, depicts Ben Jonson's *Works* as part of her mature library (Acheson, *Memoir* 212). The contents of Frances Egerton's library also indicate her interest in drama. Heidi Brayman Hackel identifies among her collection "masques, closet dramas, and plays from the public theaters," including "Ben Jonson's 1616 *Workes*, *The New Inn*, and a manuscript of the *Gypsies Masque*; Fulke Greville's *Tragedy of Mustapha*; Mary Sidney's *Antonius*; 'Diuers Playes by Shakespeare'; and seven other volumes of 'Diuers Playes'" (248-49). In addition, the plays of women writers circulated in manuscript form. Dedications like those of Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* to her sister-in-law and the first prologue of *The Concealed Fancies* by Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton, addressed to a specifically female audience, are reminders of the importance of women as readers of so-called "closet"

dramas. Other references to specific plays leave room for speculation as to whether the observations are made on the basis of attending plays or reading them. For instance, Dorothy Osbourne reveals her familiarity with both *Richard III* and *Macbeth* in her courtship letters to William Temple, perhaps a result of her extensive reading (56, 137).

Not surprisingly, then, given the pervasive popularity of drama and its ready familiarity to women as well as men, women frequently employ dramatic metaphors to describe their life experiences. Stuart writes to her uncle Gilbert Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, in 1604: “I shall as willingly play the foole for your recreation as ever” (204). Clifford interprets the social buzz created by her upcoming audience with King James in the matter of her inheritance as a performance, saying “I had a new part to play upon the stage of this world” (105). She is acutely conscious that her expected role is to acquiesce before James as she has apparently acquiesced to Sackville. The concept of the world as stage, and the woman writer as a significant player on it in spite of women’s general exclusion from the theatrical stage, also appears in Fanshawe’s memoir. After offering a few stories of her husband’s younger days for her son, Richard, namesake of his father and her ostensible audience, she resumes her tale of their life together by saying, “Now we appeared upon the stage to act what part God destined us” (113). Particularly when thrust into the public eye by status and circumstance, women felt free to imagine themselves as actors in their own life dramas. Domestic life might also be viewed as a stage, as suggested by Cavendish’s characterization of her *Sociable Letters* as “Scenes” and her comment in one letter comparing the variety of women seeking good husbands to “several Scenes in one Mask, several Acts in one Play” (8, 61).

While women may have been restricted from actually treading the boards of the playhouses, recent attention has been brought to bear on their participation in theatrical life, including their participation in off-stage aspects of production and performance, and their work in various theatrical trades.³¹ Some women were active patrons. Elizabeth Russell showed her approval of the boy companies and her active disdain of the public theater with its adult players when she petitioned the Privy Council in November 1596 to prevent ““one Burbage”” from converting some rooms in Blackfriars ““into a *common* playhouse”” (Farber 55, emphasis mine).³² Russell also prepared a private pastoral for Queen Elizabeth at Bisham in 1592 in which Pan, who has been attempting to seduce two virgins, is reformed through contemplation of the Queen’s virtues. This masque probably helped secure positions as maids of honor a few years later for Russell’s daughters Bess and Anne, who played the virgins (Farber 56-57). In addition, some women’s life stories may have provided source material for playwrights. Wall argues that the secret marriage of Maria Audley and Thomas Thynne in spite of the open hostility between their families may have been the impetus for *Romeo and Juliet* since Shakespeare’s patron, Lord Hunsdon, was closely connected to the Thynne family (*Two Elizabethan Women* xxvi-xxvii). In a further example of life influencing art, Steen identifies both Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* and addition-slips to *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy* as having plots closely analogous to the marital situation of Arbella Stuart (*Letters* 94-95).

In converse fashion, a number of events recorded in women’s diaries and memoirs also seem to have been influenced heavily by dramatic conventions. Stuart’s

brief escape from her imprisonment in 1611, walking away from East Barnet, “cross-dressed like one of Shakespeare’s heroines,” as Steen puts it, is just one of many incidents that might have been torn right out of a play-script (*Letters* 68). Perhaps the best known such incident is Halkett’s role in the escape of the Duke of York, later James II, during the Civil War. Halkett relates in her diary how, on 20 April 1648, her lover Colonel Bampffield helped the 14-year-old duke to escape house arrest at St. James’ Palace using the diversion of a game of hide-and-seek, and brought him to Halkett, who was waiting in a private house near the river. They arrive later than expected, making the escape attempt even more dangerous, yet Halkett takes an almost motherly pleasure in disguising and providing for her charge:

His Highnese called, ‘Quickely, quickely, drese mee’, and putting off his cloaths I dressed him in the women’s habitt that was prepared, which fitted His Highnese very well and was very pretty in itt. After hee had eaten some thing I made ready while I was idle, lest His Highnese should bee hungry, and having sent for a Woodstreet cake (which I knew he loved) to take in the barge, with as much hast as could bee His Highnese wentt crose the bridge to the staires where the barge lay, C.B. leading him, and imediately the boatmen plied the oare so well that they were soone outt of sight, having both wind and tide with them. (25)

Lady Fanshawe, too, recounts a highly dramatic incident involving dressing as a cabin boy to enable her to join husband Richard, dressed as a sailor, on the deck of a ship bound for Spain that has encountered Turkish pirates (127-28).³³ Although no clear

indication exists that any of these women behaved as they did because they had seen similar actions performed on stage, the unmistakable dramatic flair with which these incidents are recorded suggests these upper-class writers' awareness of dramatic convention as they relate their daring actions, role reversals, and disguisings, the very stuff of popular drama.

Anna Trapnel's *Report and Plea* is significant as a memoir by a woman of middling status that relies heavily on dramatic techniques and daring gender reversals to exonerate her of charges of witchcraft. A Fifth-Monarchist prophet, Trapnel published this narrative account of her journey to Cornwall and her subsequent arrest and trial in 1654, the same year in which two transcriptions of her prophetic utterances at Whitehall were published.³⁴ Characterizing herself as the marginal handmaid of God, she employs her prophetic trances, and also her unmarried status, to leverage an extraordinary license to speak. Her trial scene, in particular, relies on dramatic techniques that call attention to her self-presentation.³⁵ Not only does she position herself as a spectacle, she uses the dramatic gaze to assert her political equality with her accusers and she carefully delineates the court setting, with the justices in the position of advantage above her, to portray herself as victimized.

The most significant dramatic aspect of the trial scene, however, is its dialogue, which Trapnel manipulates for the benefit of both her court and print audiences. Her uncharacteristic use of direct dialogue for the trial reads more like a play-script than a trial transcript (or a devotional or prophetic work), with Trapnel's lines indicated by the initials "A.T." and the justices' dialogue sometimes recorded directly and sometimes

reported, as it suits her purposes.³⁶ Claiming that God provides her speech, she relies heavily on male religious models, most frequently choosing passages from the early church fathers and from the prophet Isaiah (rather than Daniel, who would mark her clearly as a Fifth Monarchist, and, therefore, a troublemaker), with Christ, of course, as her chief model. Always careful to use her private spirituality as her defense, Trapnel represents her activity as “prayer” rather than preaching or public prophecy, unseemly activities for a woman. However, her consistent appropriation of male religious models offers a subtle assertion of her superiority to the justices in spite of her apparent acquiescence to their authority. Trapnel also indulges in dramatic wordplay that emphasizes her secular purposes. Like Christ before the Sanhedrin, Trapnel chooses not to answer the initial questions put before her. But her response—“I am not careful to answer you in that matter” (80)—seems more secular than Christ-like and is not prefaced with an attribution to God’s inspiration as is her “not guilty” plea.

As James Holstun notes, Trapnel simply refuses to behave like a defendant (291). She depicts herself as returning questions for the justices’ questions, repeatedly asking, in effect, “Why not?” to their inquiries about her reasons for traveling to Cornwall. She chides Justice Launce about his lack of “extraordinary impulses of spirit” in order to avoid answering his potentially incriminating question about her own impulses of spirit (81). While Susanna Mintz argues that Trapnel distances herself from agency by directing attention toward the “disruptiveness of the justices” and even her own silence at one point (6), I would argue that Trapnel exhibits her fullest sense of agency at this juncture. She takes advantage of the confusion her presence generates in the court and

clearly dramatizes her response for maximum effect on the justices and on her larger audience. She briefly turns the gender tables by acting as the (male) inquisitor and by characterizing the justices as silly women for her readers, but then reverses this trend when it suits her to behave in flattering feminine fashion toward the more sympathetic Justice Lobb. At one point, she appears to accept his advice about not judging worldly authority, but then, in a remarkable tour de force, she demands to be allowed to speak, like Paul before Agrippa, after having repeatedly dodged all of the justices' questions. As Magro observes, Trapnel is truly the heroine of her own interrogation (427).

The effect of Trapnel's verbal outmaneuvering of the judges and her theatrical self display is to clear her of charges of witchcraft in the eyes of the crowd and to reveal her defiance of the secular proceedings against her. But the highly theatrical way in which she calls attention to her body and, more specifically, to her voice suggests powerful purposes beyond her apparent religious motivations.³⁷ Her voice in this narrative is of utmost importance, not only as an instrument of the prophecy of God's handmaid, but, especially in the trial scene, as a dramatic display of female agency. Her unmarried status is significant in this regard. Trapnel directs this narrative about a secular trial based on supposed religious misconduct to a specifically secular audience not only because she wants religious and political freedom, but because she wants freedom from the social expectations for a woman in her situation. Trapnel is viewed as dangerous because she is not subject to a husband's control.³⁸ Placing herself outside the expected role of wife allows her to more freely appropriate a powerful speaking position and to travel freely to disseminate her prophecies, yet it unnerves secular authorities

who, consequently, see her as uncontrollable. Her responses to Justice Lobb reveal that she views a husband as a social “hindrance” (81). Furthermore, she bristles at any attempt by others to control her speech, revealing a need to retain verbal control of her theologically, politically, and socially charged situation. Given her precarious position as an unmarried female prophet in a radical Puritan sect, making herself the verbally ingenuous heroine of her own drama offers Trapnel both secular exoneration and a remarkable degree of personal agency.

Trapnel’s reliance on dramatic self-presentation and the other examples included here suggest that the representations of women popularized in the playhouse had much wider cultural currency and that women might exploit them selectively to achieve their own ends. Pamela Allen Brown’s claims that early modern jesting culture provided “cultural scripts that women could use as prompts for their own performances” and as “templates for action” in fighting oppression are pertinent in this regard (*Better a Shrew* 31, 222). Drama’s pervasive popularity and influence suggest that dramatic representations of women, both on stage and in print or manuscript, might have provided similar cultural scripts for women’s reenactments. Both Arbella Stuart and Ann Fanshawe seem to draw readily on widely available dramatic scripts in their disguisings, while Trapnel uses strategies to avoid religious repression that could easily have been modeled on any number of witty, engaging comic heroines. Because of the ease with which dramatic entertainment seems to have influenced the larger culture and because dramatic techniques were so readily adopted by women in developing their own self-presentations, closer attention to women’s representations in the drama of the period

seems merited. The chapters that follow will attend to issues of women's marital speech, first as represented on the popular male stage, and then in comparisons between male- and female-authored drama.

The dramatic tendencies of Stuart, Trapnel, Halkett, and other women letter-writers and autobiographers are potent reminders that the various technologies of the self employed by early modern women in recording their own stories were influenced by generic conventions of first-person writing, including letter-writing, spiritual diaries, secular autobiography and memoir, as well as those of other popular genres, particularly drama. Women were defined by their marital status and instructed by both religious and secular authorities to heed cultural expectations of silence and submissiveness to their husbands. Yet, while many women may have passively accepted these limitations to their rhetorical agency, judging by the varied attitudes toward women's speech (particularly marital speech) examined in this chapter, many others chose to disregard the submissive roles proffered to them. Conscious of the precarious positions in which they were sometimes placed as managers of households and estates, yet subject to the authority of husbands who might be indifferent, ill, or absent, they nevertheless endeavored, sometimes unsuccessfully but often masterfully, to present themselves in language that could best reach their audiences and serve their purposes. Whether prompted by maternal justifications, like Jocelin and Leigh, religious reasons, like Cary and Trapnel, or political motivations, like Clifford, women often took risky or unpopular rhetorical stances in their speech and in their first-person writing. At times, the obedient ideal was consciously manipulated, as by Arbella Stuart, with her vexed female body

prominently displayed within her letters to James as a signifier of the writer's sincere subservience. Particularly toward the mid-seventeenth century, however, available evidence from women's lifewriting shows them speaking more openly about their attitudes toward marriage and conversing more freely and affectionately with their husbands, as seen in the greater marital equality advocated by Osbourne and Egerton. In contrast to the male-authored drama to which I turn next to rehearse the nature of women's representations in the dominant dramatic tradition, this examination of early modern women's lifewriting unlooses a far richer, more complex, and more multiple vocality from the bride's mouth.

Notes

¹ Portions of this chapter were previously presented at the Writing Cultures Symposium, Texas A&M University, October 2008; and at South Central Renaissance Conference, Corpus Christi, March 2010.

² See, for example, Anna Trapnel more than 20 years earlier.

³ See Ezell (*The Patriarch's Wife* 37-38; *Writing Women's Literary History* 25-28); Graham et al (8-9). More recently, Phyllis Rackin also has suggested that we reexamine our images of women's oppression in the period (*Shakespeare* 8-12).

⁴ The dates for the works discussed here are somewhat broader than those of the plays in the following discussion for several reasons. First, the writings examined in this chapter have been influenced not only by the general availability of materials by women, which become more plentiful later in the period under discussion, but also by the availability of print editions. Second, it is presumed that the literary and sociocultural environments that produced a passion for dramatic entertainments in the Tudor-Stuart period were influenced by the tastes and customs of the decades immediately preceding, and also that some aspects of the environment of the 1650s were still in effect in the decades immediately following. In other words, I presume a large degree of continuity both before and after the target period of 1590 to 1660. In addition, the wealth of women's lifewriting available from the 1660s and 1670s often records events of earlier generations. Hence, even though the style of writing may have been influenced by later developments, the events retold took place in the period under discussion.

⁵ See Daybell (*Women Letter-Writers* 5); Mendelson (“Stuart Women’s Diaries” 185-86); Wilcox (“Private Writing” 48).

⁶ See, for example, Hackel’s discussion of the fluidity of oral, manuscript, and print cultures (25-31).

⁷ Many recent researchers have alerted us to these potential pitfalls. See, for example, Sharon Cadman Seelig (9-10); and Daybell (*Women Letter-Writers* 5-6). In addition, the tendency of editors to favor particular ideals of femininity in the process of selection and publication over the intervening centuries has skewed both the available range of early modern materials and our understanding of them. See Margaret Ezell’s chapter on eighteenth and nineteenth century editorial approaches to women writers in *Writing Women’s Literary History* (66-103).

⁸ Of course, devotional writing was the most popular form for both sexes in early modern England; however, men generally were freer to write in other genres than women were, especially early in the period.

⁹ See Foucault (“Technologies”). Webster uses this terminology in his discussion of spiritual autobiography (40), as does Daybell in discussing correspondence (*Women Letter-Writers* 167-69).

¹⁰ For additional information on letter-writing conventions, see Daybell’s thorough examination in *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England*. For facsimile examples paired with brief discussions on topics including letter-writing manuals, material conditions, use of secretaries, and delivery methods, see Stewart and Wolfe’s *Letterwriting in Renaissance England*.

¹¹ See Margaret Ezell *Writing Women's Literary History*, especially Chapters 3 and 4 (66-131).

¹² See Phillippy's edition, Letter 44, note 22. Unfortunately, Bess died not long after the most likely date of composition of this letter.

¹³ Seelig remarks on the nearly verbatim retelling of conversations surrounding this courtship, suggesting that Halkett might have referred to a diary while writing and claiming that the dramatic "scene," as she pointedly calls it, has "the persuasive force of a rhetorical treatise" (115).

¹⁴ See Gowing's discussion of betrothal conventions and both men's and women's mastery and manipulation of them in *Domestic Danger* (143-45).

¹⁵ See Smith's introduction to her letters (xxi-xxxiv) and the excerpts he includes from her brother Henry Osbourne's diary (183).

¹⁶ See especially Letters 2, 3-4, 9.

¹⁷ Smith's introduction describes the cabinet and traces the passing of the letters from one family member to another over the intervening centuries (xliv-xlv).

¹⁸ Although frequently characterized as curmudgeonly by A. L. Rowse and others, Lady Russell is appreciated as being frequently humorous by the most recent editor of her letters, Patricia Phillippy.

¹⁹ See Seelig's examination of Clifford's purposes in writing this portion of her diary and the various issues she explores in it, including the ongoing disagreement with her husband (38-56).

²⁰ Seelig is cautious about assigning too much importance to this event (31-32). I would agree that Hoby's diary leaves the details of the incident frustratingly unclear; however, my interest here is in the fact that this apparently substantive communication between the couple is written rather than spoken.

²¹ See Maria's undated letter to Joan, which Wall dates at about 1605, during the suit over estates and goods after John's death. Maria delights in telling Joan that her former prized garden at Longleat is now in ruins and that surely Joan's basest land is better manured because "so corpulent a Lady [as Joan is] cannot but do much yourself towards the soiling of the land, and I think that hath been, and will be all the good that you intend to leave behind you at Corsley" (34).

²² Georgianna Ziegler explains "my lady's chamber" as a confining space, "a kind of domestic enclosure created by patriarchal feudal society, afraid both of the weakness and the insidious power of women" (74). Retha Warnicke concedes that "women's lives were expected to be and were much more private than those of their modern counterparts," but seems to view as a positive development the possibility of women carving out some private time through means of draperies or screens, closets, or internal barriers (129, 128). Lena Cowen Orlin disputes Alan Stewart's description of male closets as public and women's as private, reminding us that privacy is a construct and that women's closets ran the gamut from Hoby's closet as a place for prayer, mediation, and writing to Lady Anne Drury's showpiece of a closet, adorned with 43 colorful panels and six painted cartouches in Latin (45-47, 48-49). Sasha Roberts sees women's closets as sites of potential agency, feared by male commentators because of

their associations with female control of consumption—both literary and sexual (56-57).

²³ See Acheson's note on the text for a description and analysis of the Portland and Knole manuscripts (*Memoir* 37-40).

²⁴ After George Clifford died in 1605, Anne and her mother Margaret had unsuccessfully advanced their claim that Anne, as his only surviving heir, should retain her father's titles by arguing that her femaleness did not inhibit her from providing military service to the king and by establishing tenure on the lands. The situation with Clifford's ancestral property was particularly complex, with the broad outlines as follows: Anne's grandfather had made a will entailing the property to his heirs male, but his will was held to be invalid and Anne to be the heir for Skipton Castle and the properties in Westmoreland; however, the Judges' Award of 1615, later upheld by the King in 1617, divided the lands between Clifford and her uncle Francis Clifford, giving Francis the use of the lands and Anne a monetary compensation; in 1643, when cousin Henry Clifford (predeceased by his father Francis) died without male heirs, Anne finally inherited (Acheson, *Memoir* 17-26).

²⁵ A 1610 proclamation ordered recusants not to come within 10 miles of London (see Henry Falkland's letter to Charles I in Cary, *Life and Letters* 318-19).

²⁶ See Wolfe's Textual Introduction (*Life and Letters* 225-27) and the copy by Henry Cary, the endorsement of which indicates it was abstracted from Elizabeth Cary's letter to her husband, although not, apparently, an actual copy (272-73). In addition to this fragment, Wolfe includes all of Elizabeth Cary's extant correspondence: 15 letters and two petitions. Twenty-seven of Henry Cary's numerous extant letters that seem to

impinge on his relationship with his wife are also included. See List of Letters (235-42).

²⁷ See Hackel, especially Chapter 2, on the lack of the clear boundaries between reading, writing, and speaking that we would discern today.

²⁸ See Elizabeth Mazzola's study of Mary Stuart's needlework and poems. See also Lisa Klein on Elizabeth's embroidered gifts to her step-mother Katherine Parr and to Henry VIII, both of which were accompanied by her translations (476-85); and Susan Frye on needlework as an expression of women's alliances with other women.

²⁹ The two earliest versions of this letter were copied in Stuart's own hand, and two additional versions were copied in her secretary's hand, one with what appear to be Stuart's comments recorded in marginal notations, again by the secretary. It is unknown which version was sent to James (see Steen's notes in *Letters* 263-66), although my argument assumes that the draft labeled "D" by Steen is a copy of the letter sent to James, without the annotations, of course. Regarding Stuart's illness see Steen's Introduction to the *Letters* (66-68) and also her more thorough treatment in "How Subject to Interpretation." With regard to the attempted escape, a letter intended for Seymour's younger brother alerted authorities, resulting in Stuart's arrest on the coast of Calais, while Seymour, who had been delayed and had procured separate passage, escaped to the Continent (see *Letters* 68-70).

³⁰ See also Gurr's discussion (69-76).

³¹ See McManus ("Women"), for example.

³² See Gurr for the history of the second Blackfriars playhouse and the development of hall playhouses (26-30).

³³ Seelig also notes the dramatic nature of this incident (101).

³⁴ For more information on the Fifth Monarchist movement, see the introduction to Trapnel's text in *Her Own Life* (Graham et al 71-73) and Hinds (48-49 and 150-51).

³⁵ She thus creates what both Maria Magro and James Holstun have recognized as a sort of political theater (417; 279, 285). Longfellow, too, comments on her verbal license (154, 162).

³⁶ Trial transcripts were typically recorded in third person and were shaped by factors beyond the witnesses' control, including lawyers' influence and scribal conventions. See Gowing, for example, for a discussion of factors that shaped court narratives in libel and slander cases (44-48).

³⁷ See Hinds for an examination of Trapnel's use of her body in her prophecies (124).

³⁸ The model of the wife's respect for husbandly authority frequently works to authorize the speech of married religious women. Suzanne Trill suggests that Katherine Stubbes is a fitting model for the ideal Christian woman, in spite of her public defense of her faith, precisely because she is subject to her husband (34).

CHAPTER III
SLIPPERY TONGUES: SHREWS AND SILENT WOMEN ON THE EARLY
MODERN STAGE

In December 1609 or early 1610, Ben Jonson's *Epicene* was suppressed soon after its first performance because Lady Arbellia Stuart, cousin of James I, objected to an apparent reference to herself. In act 5, scene 1, Sir Amorous La Foole says that Sir John Daw carries instruments with him to draw "maps" of the people he encounters, including those "of the Prince of Moldavia, and of *his* mistress, Mistress Epicene" (5.1.21-23; emphasis added).¹ The awkward possessive pronoun might refer to Daw, as one of Epicene's suitors, but Stuart clearly understood it to refer also to "the Prince of Moldavia," with whom she had been linked romantically in court gossip. Venetian representatives to England describe her reaction in a letter to the Doge and Senate dated 18 Feb. 1608:

Lady Arabella [Stuart] is seldom seen outside her rooms and lives in greater dejection than ever. She complains that in a certain comedy the playwright introduced an allusion to her person and the part played by the Prince of Moldavia. The play was suppressed. Her Excellency is very ill pleased and shows a determination in this coming Parliament to secure the punishment of certain persons, we don't know who. (qtd. in Graves 141)

Certainly, Stuart had a political motivation for her complaints. Rumors about her secret attempts to marry a foreigner abounded at court, and Stephano Janiculo (also known as Stephen Bogdan), the supposed Prince of Moldavia (later revealed as a fraud), had

claimed publicly that the pair was engaged. At the time, Stuart was under guard for an offense the nature of which is not clear, but which probably turned on James's fears that she was involved in a plot to wrest the throne from him. Stuart's objections were quite likely intended, to some degree, as a conscious political ploy to distract the court and to extract a promise from James that she might marry any Englishman she desired, all while she pursued a secret engagement to William Seymour, also a Tudor claimant to the throne.²

Karen Newman has argued cogently that Stuart's story marks a site of struggle regarding early modern representations of femininity. The identification of Stuart with *Epicene*, she says, marks Stuart as one of the play's hermaphroditical women (140-43).³ Additionally, I would suggest that Stuart's story marks a site of struggle regarding women's discursive agency relative to marriage, that Stuart's objections to Jonson's play, on a more personal level, are the result of the caricature of her not only as somewhat masculine, but as a thinly disguised, uncontrollable shrew. Douglas Lanier comments perceptively that what he calls Stuart's "misreading" of the play undercuts its "fantasy of masculine discursive control," with the result that "the ideal of masculine silence remains haunted by its feminine or emasculating shadow" (15). But I would question whether this should really be treated as a misreading. As we have already seen, Stuart was adept at using words to her advantage and chafed at the submissive verbal posturing she was forced to engage in as a female courtier (see 78-82). It seems unlikely that she misunderstood what seems to be an intentionally ambiguous line in Jonson's play. And all of this was occurring on the eve of her marriage to Seymour, a time when

she perhaps felt more sensitive than usual about her reputation for outspokenness since it may have negatively affected her reputation as a potential wife. If she was upset sufficiently by a play about silencing outspoken wives to fear that she was being ridiculed personally, should this not be seen as a valid response? And if Jonson's representations of women forward attitudes that are in some measure typical of the early modern "male" stage, can we not understand Stuart's reading of his play as, in some measure, a "female" response to representations of women as constructed by male dramatists of the period?

Given Stuart's objection to Jonson's apparent characterization of her, it would seem worthwhile to examine the prevailing attitudes toward and representations of women's speech on the male-authored stage. The varied and complex attitudes toward marital speech already observed in women's first-person writing in Chapter II contradict the images of wives on the early modern stage, which instead rely on and reinforce the reductive popular stereotypes of the shrew and the silent woman. Play after play ridicules or demonizes the verbally aggressive woman, struggling for linguistic mastery over her husband. Take, for instance, Dekker's Margery Eyre or Vittoria in *The White Devil* or the definitive example: Shakespeare's Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Likewise, the submissive heroine, though somewhat less common as a type because she generates less drama, as it were, is valorized in characters like the soft-spoken Cordelia and the long-suffering Hermione. This is the type of silent wife coveted by Morose in *Epicene, or The Silent Woman*, with hilarious though predictably negative results. Are the portrayals of shrews and silent women in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Epicene* as

simplistic as they might seem at first glance? What do these representations suggest about the way in which women were viewed by male authors in the period? How do these representations, penned and performed by men, compare to those we have seen in women's own first-person writings? And what does Stuart's reaction to Jonson's play suggest about the ways in which other women might have reacted to and been influenced by such performances? This chapter will explore the complicated presentations of shrews and silent women in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Epicene*. These two plays present issues of women's marital speech in a far more ambiguous manner than do conduct books, at times playfully, though with less flexibility than was often apparent in individual marital relationships, as women's lifewriting of the period reveals. Nevertheless, wifely rhetoric in these plays remains always subject to the training and manipulation of the male's authority, whether as husband, or as educator and dramatist.

Shrewishness and Silence

A great deal of critical attention has been directed to Shakespeare's infamous shrew and, perhaps as a consequence, to historical shrews in the early modern period. Frances Dolan's remarkable volume on *The Taming of the Shrew* situates the play's main plot within a long tradition of shrew-taming folk-tales, ballads, and other popular entertainments (244-326). Originally, a *shrew* was an overly talkative, ill-natured and aggressive man, but, by the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, the term referred almost exclusively to meddlesome women, particularly wives.⁴ According to Dolan, the shrew's behavior is troublesome precisely because of her defiance of her husband; she is "a woman refusing to submit to man's authority and aggressively

asserting her independence” (10). A *scold* generally referred to a particularly virulent variety of shrew, one whom Martin Ingram identifies as “a turbulent, chiding, brawling person,” whose abusive behavior toward family members or neighbors was subject to punishment, whether imposed informally or legally (“Scolding Women” 51). Such unruly women may have been punished quite frequently through informal shaming rituals such as charivari and skimmingtons, varying from one locale to another, but generally designed to shame both the offending woman and the husband who failed to control her. These processions usually included rough-music and a mock beating, with male neighbors standing in for the offending couple (Underdown 127-33). Legal punishments were most frequently enacted against scolding wives of lower middling status. These included use of the scold’s bridle or brank (a metal gag or bit to suppress the tongue, attached to headgear with a chain fastened in front to allow the woman to be forcibly led, used primarily in northern regions) and the cucking- or ducking-stool (often a converted privy stool or dung cart on which the offending woman was paraded through town and ducked in the nearest body of water, probably more commonly used in urban areas).⁵ Some disagreement exists about the frequency with which such punishments were carried out. Underdown cites an “intense preoccupation” with the prosecution of scolds from about 1560 to 1640 as evidence of a crisis in the gender order, while Ingram agrees that punishments increased in severity at about this time but believes that the overall incidence of punishment was “surely lower” than Underdown claims (Underdown 119; Ingram “Scolding Women” 55-57). Clearly, historical evidence is somewhat problematic, as records are often sketchy or incomplete, and are further

complicated by shifts in population and changes in legal jurisdiction over time (Underdown 134; Ingram 53).

While Ingram remains unconvinced that the number of cases brought against scolds in the period is sufficient evidence for “a crisis in gender relations” (71), many historians and literary critics disagree. For example, Lynda Boose finds the documented number of extant scold’s bridles and the frequency of bridling metaphors in period literature convincing evidence for the commonplace silencing of “unruly” women (“Scolding Brides”). In a study of *The Taming of the Shrew*, she attributes the apparent anxiety about taming women to fears regarding changes in ownership of property, including the gradual change from family holdings to private land ownership and the increased practice of enclosure. These fears then were displaced onto women through the longstanding “equation between land and the female body” (“*Taming*” 196-203). Mark Breitenberg cites numerous additional indicators of anxiety that point to a crisis in the gender order: increased emphasis on male self-government in conduct literature; high numbers of sex crimes and slander cases; popular links between women’s sexuality and social unrest; the popularity of marriage manuals; concern with gender and sexuality in drama and poetry; emphasis on the economic and symbolic functions of women’s chastity; and historical events including rampant inflation, poor harvests, women’s increasing independence in the labor force, and Protestant conceptions of the family that offered a “double message” about whether the heavenly Father or the father of the household was in authority (*Anxious Masculinity* 17-26). In addition, Anthony Fletcher describes a patriarchal system in which men’s fears of women’s agency combined with

developing gender ideologies, which shifted gradually from a hierarchical basis in scripture and medicine to an oppositional view of gender arising out of secular politics and class consciousness, eventually producing a rigid gender hierarchy by 1800 (283-84).

Especially important in this understanding of a gender system in crisis is its view of women's speech as a clear threat to male agency. Fletcher claims that "Men's control of women's speech, an aspect of their potency, was at the heart of the early modern gender system" (*Anxious Masculinity* 12). As we have already seen, a certain ambivalence was associated with the tongue, lending both positive and negative connotations to rhetoric (see 9-10). Although a man might be ridiculed for speaking excessively or foolishly, speech nevertheless was seen primarily as a masculinity quality. Thus, any attempt by the female to usurp rhetorical power might be interpreted as an attempt to assume dominance reserved for the male. Linda Woodbridge reminds us that contemporary notions of equality were an entirely foreign concept to early modern minds (130). Although a companionate model of marriage as a semi-cooperative partnership between husband and wife was advocated by William Gouge and others,⁶ marriages, like kingdoms, were still seen generally as hierarchical, according to the prevailing humanist thought, with the wife a subject to be tamed. Such theory, applied more or less stringently within different households, as we have seen in our review of women's correspondence and diaries, continued to have enormous impact on societal attitudes. Catherine Belsey examines the threat posed by female speech in tragedies involving absolutist marriages: "Domestic absolutism requires that women be able to

speak in order to acquiesce, but it withholds the right to use that ability to protest or to make demands. To speak from a place of independence, from an autonomous position, to be, in other words, a subject, is to personate masculine virtue” (180-81). As a threat to patriarchy, women’s speech, therefore, is often kept at the margins (191).

In addition, since a woman’s tongue was seen as the counterpart of a man’s penis, her talkativeness was inescapably linked with her sexuality (Jardine, *Still Harping* 121; Mazzio 59-60). As a result, both women’s infidelity and eloquence were demonized (and often hopelessly intertwined) as threats to male agency. In discussing the threat to masculinity of theatrical cross-dressing, for example, Breitenberg describes the demand for the chaste, silent, obedient woman (and her representation in writing and speech) as “a self-protective strategy, a way for men to maintain . . . tenuous control” (*Anxious Masculinity* 166). I would argue that, since submissive speech was also an outward signifier of both marital obedience and chastity, it provides the same “interpretive transparency” that Breitenberg attributes to conventionally gendered clothing in the period and creates the same “unreadab[ility] by men” when violated (162, 164). Women who spoke too much—whether described as shrews, scolds, or unruly women—risked not only appropriating the masculine prerogative associated with speech, but also becoming unreadable as texts, indecipherable particularly *as women*, in a male-dominated verbal economy.

The fear of the shrew and her unreadability manifests itself in a desire for her opposite: the silent woman. As Fletcher remarks, “Women’s talk always threatens disorder; women’s silence thus comes to be prized to an absurd degree” (14). In conduct

literature, this silence frequently is expressed not as an absolute but rather a relative state. Thus, William Whately counsels in *A Bride-Bush* that a wife's reverence for her husband "doth inioyne the woman silence, when her husband is present: I mean not an vtter abstinence from speech, but vsing fewer words (and those mild and low) not loud and eager" (200). Similarly, Gouge marks both extreme talkativeness and absolute silence as negative, urging instead "the meane betwixt both, . . . for a wife to be sparing in speech" rather than having a "slipperie" tongue (282). This male ethos of feminine silence, also encouraged in other popular literature, including marriage sermons and works on women's education, closely circumscribed any opportunities for woman's self-fashioning, according to Tita French Baumlín. The ideal woman is deprived not only of learned language but also of "*any* language that might defend her rights to use her learning or to develop her rhetorical skills. A rhetoric of silence becomes the only means to fashion an acceptable public self" ("A good (wo)man" 243).

More recently, however, Christina Luckyj has argued that silence was not as strictly gender-specific as the male-speech/female-silence binarism would suggest. For example, although gendered female in iconography, silence was valued by Erasmus and other humanists to cure male abuses of the tongue (*Moving Rhetoricke* 48-51). Luckyj thus argues that simple conflation of silence with subjection and speech with masculinity prove unworkable (8-9). She explores feminine silence as "a subjective rather than a subjected space," opening itself to competing discourses and multiple interpretations (56-57). In other words, rather than merely indicating submission, silence might also serve as a site of resistance. Although the silent woman thus risked being

viewed as threatening—and, like the shrew, perhaps even unreadable, illegible as female because of her inscrutability—this silent resistance might prove powerful from a female perspective. Luckyj sees drama, in particular, as serving a key role in opening new spaces for women because the performance is open to an audience's interpretation (78-79). In spite of its construction by the male dramatist, she claims, a woman's staged silence signifies her potential unruliness, creating space for potential redefinition (90-91, 165-66). Ironically, silence can thus be read as a strategy not unlike the intractability of the shrew.

Representations of shrews and silent women in drama deserve careful scrutiny because they are far less clear-cut than has often been previously assumed. Even in plays that emphasize one representation of woman at the expense of the other, shrewishness at the expense of silence, for example, women's speech is portrayed as a far more complex and ambiguous issue than either the restrictions of conduct literature or the relative freedoms of women's lifewriting might imply. Plays like *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Epicene* that depend upon women's speech or its lack for their main plots clearly bear this out. And although the predominant critical emphasis in examinations of Shakespeare's play has long been on Kate's shrewishness, and in Jonson's play on the loquaciousness of the male wits at the expense of the female characters, a careful reading of the two plays serves to complicate issues of women's voice as portrayed in male-authored drama. In both plays, the plots are driven by transformations (or potential transformations) in women's language use: from shrewishness to relative silence or from silence to intense shrewishness. Both shrewishness and total silence disrupt men's ability

to correctly “read” women. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, a recuperative space of limited personal agency is allowed women who learn to speak, to perform, as expected. In *Epicene*, Dauphine uses the instability generated by false readings of one “woman” to manipulate both women and men, resulting in keen disparagement of women’s attempts at agency by denying them a chance to speak at all. In both, the transformations of the female characters are dependent on the males’ manipulations, suggesting a basic anxiety about men’s ability to control women’s speech. This effect is intensified in both plays by the way in which attention is drawn to the boy actors who play female roles. And Arbella Stuart’s outrage over Jonson’s play gives us a tantalizing glimpse of women’s reactions to male constructions of them as speakers and as women on the public stage.

Reading and Performing the Shrew: *The Taming of the Shrew*

The reversal from shrewishness to submission is well-documented in the critical discussion of *The Taming of the Shrew*. As Valerie Wayne has remarked, the shrew was the stuff of drama because “she was amusing, memorable, highly dramatic, and she talked” (“Refashioning” 167). Certainly, Katherine shares all of these qualities. But it is the latter quality—her speech—that poses the greatest challenge to Petruccio and to male authority in general in the play. Initially, the consummate shrew—scolding her father, berating and striking her sister, and engaging in defiant wordplay with her first and only suitor within her first two scenes on stage—she becomes submissive (or apparently so) by the final scene. The contention between male and female speech which provides the play’s energy has been frequently examined. For instance, Karen Newman links what she sees as a failed attempt to contain Katherine’s verbal revolt against male dominance

to the “community fantasy” of shaming the shrewish wife in skimmington (37). Joel Fineman claims that the play reproduces a preexisting quarrel between male and female language without offering any closure to the argument, an argument that he sees still being reproduced, not only in the critical disagreement over *Shrew*, but in the larger critical debate between Lacanian psychoanalysis and feminist attempts to deconstruct it. Maureen Quilligan posits language as central to any changes of social class or gender role in the play and further emphasizes its importance in the construction of both Petruccio’s and Kate’s new subject positions (215-16, 219). Wayne Rebhorn classifies Petruccio and Kate as “sovereign-rhetor” and “subject-auditor,” respectively, but goes on to show how the play ultimately deconstructs Petruccio’s dominant rhetorical position through the transformative powers of the very rhetoric he wields (302).

This reading of the play will focus on male concern with female language as a way of accurately “reading” the female as text and on the slipperiness of female language, which ultimately eludes any clear reading in a markedly male point of view. An interest in reading in its various forms is evident throughout *The Taming of the Shrew* in its depictions of humanist education for women, including reading both Latin and music. Still more important is the attention given to reading the other, including the rival wooer. Yet the act of reading, of interpreting and responding to a text, is focused particularly on the female. Though the male characters seem most comfortable being able to categorize the female characters in familiar terms as “shrewish” or “silent,” the female characters slip (uncomfortably for the males) between the two in the various stages of courtship and marriage, suggesting the general instability of these male-

authored constructions of female gender.

The inability of Sly to read his “wife” in the Induction anticipates this problem in the play proper. When the Hostess threatens to have the drunken Sly placed in the stocks for failure to pay for damage he incurs in her tavern, Sly instantly labels her too wordy, attempting to silence her with an ironic misreading from Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy*: “*paucas palabras*” (1.5).⁷ His response is so automatic that it suggests his familiarity with other outspoken women, perhaps because of a wordy wife at home. However, when convinced that he is indeed a lord and when presented with the page Bartholomew dressed as his supposed wife, Sly is considerably less sure of himself. His confusion is partly the result of his lack of familiarity with the familial conventions of a higher social status. He wants his “wife” to address him as “husband,” and he tries to address her by her given name, whereas a noble couple would address each other as “lord” and “madam.” The joke, of course, is that, as a beggar, he is accustomed to lower-class women, frequently stereotyped as less tractable because less bound by the conventional behavior of gentlewomen. Bartholomew’s caricature of the submissive, obedient ideal convinces Sly that this is a “wife,” but he remains uncomfortable addressing her directly except to command her to bed. Sly’s misreading of Bartholomew as “wife,” and, further, as “female,” reenacts in light-hearted fashion the anxiety on which the plot of the play proper turns—whether men successfully can read the other, particularly the wife or prospective wife—an endeavor in which women’s language use plays a central role.

Like the wordy Hostess and like Sly’s submissive “wife,” Kate is quickly classified on the basis of her speech. Even before she opens her mouth, she is marked by

her younger sister's would-be suitor Gremio as a candidate for carting or informal shaming (1.1.55). That she speaks only 12 lines of almost 250 in the first scene and that her language is even sometimes deferential—she addresses both her father and Hortensio as “sir,” for example—challenge Gremio's labeling of her. Her speech from the outset is witty and playful, but also at times defiant, particularly toward male authority, and this is the quality above all others that seems to have earned her a negative reputation with the male residents of Padua. Kate's “waspy” tongue also has been thoroughly entrenched in the critical literature (2.1.208). Yet despite the farcical aspects of her characterization, Shakespeare does offer her some depth.⁸ For instance, the play makes clear references to possible provocations for Kate's shrewishness: she is jealous of Bianca's many suitors; she is angry that Baptista favors her more soft-spoken younger sister; and she is resentful that Bianca's “good girl” image is a conscious manipulation of their father and of Bianca's suitors, whereas Kate herself disdains such artifice. These mitigating factors are overlooked by the male characters, who engage Kate based on their preconceived notions of her as shrew rather than responding to these compelling reasons for her dissatisfaction. Even Petruccio, who at times seems to hit on the exact words to counteract Kate's grievances, does so formulaically, in response to a stereotyped image of her (and of himself as shrew-tamer) rather than on the basis of any more intimate understanding between them. For instance, in act 2, scene 1, before he has even met her, he aggressively refashions her in words, planning his oppositional strategy to her speeches and silences:

Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain

She sings as sweetly as a nightingale. . . .

Say she be mute and will not speak a word,

Then I'll commend her volubility,

And say she utter piercing eloquence. (2.1.168-73)

Both of Petruccio's strategies rely heavily on the ideal of the submissive wife, with his response to her potential railing intended to startle her into sweetness, and his response to her possible, though unlikely, submission intended to reinforce that quality in her. In a discussion of the bawdy pun on tongue in tail in the verbal parrying that ensues in their first meeting, Rebhorn aptly claims: "Petruchio's triumph will be a matter of possessing Katherine's *tale*, which he has been able to enter and control with his orator's tongue" (305). Like the other men around him, Petruccio appropriates her story, reading only the shrew in Kate and neglecting to notice that her shrewishness is neither unprovoked, nor as straightforward as a reading of the play as farce would imply.

Kate's shrewish behavior is also complicated by occasional silences, a fact infrequently remarked in the critical discussion of the play.⁹ Particularly interesting in this regard is act 2, scene 1, in which Kate and Petruccio's first meeting is flanked by significant silences on Kate's part (Amy Smith 103). The scene begins with Kate's rather wicked abuse of Bianca, whom she believes has humiliated her intentionally by attracting so many suitors. When Baptista intervenes, however, the terms of the argument crystallize further: he defends Bianca by saying she has never crossed Kate "with a bitter word," clearly implying that she is the opposite of Kate (2.1.28). Kate's complaint in the next line—"Her silence flouts me"—is thus a pointed accusation that

Bianca's is an intentional guise used to discredit her own openly vocalized discontent. Kate registers her frustration in a short speech to Baptista and then, much like Bianca a few lines earlier, exits weeping, in silent defiance of a father whom she finds both unsympathetic and uncaring.

The other significant silence—actually a small cluster of silences—occurs toward the end of her extended witty banter with Petruccio. The rapid-fire stichomythia of some 40 lines is broken twice: first, when Petruccio offers his vision of Kate as “passing gentle”; and, after a brief resumption of their verbal quips, once again when he informs her not only that he and Baptista have already agreed on a dowry, but that he is “born to tame” her (2.1.235, 2.1.268). In both instances, Kate's consternation and confusion can easily be imagined. She must be questioning both Petruccio's motives for describing her in such clearly inaccurate terms and Baptista's rationale for not acquainting her with the marriage negotiations.¹⁰ However, the most pronounced and puzzling silence is yet to come. After telling Petruccio, “I'll see thee hanged on Sunday first” rather than marry him, Kate is inexplicably quiet as Baptista rapidly concludes the marriage negotiations and completes the betrothal by asking the couple to join hands (2.1.291, 310). Rebhorn argues that this silence is a possible indication of Kate's desire to marry, but he emphasizes the conscious manipulation of her by both her father and Petruccio in cementing the bargain (318). This is one of many moments in this play when the text offers considerable room for ambiguity. Kate might be silent out of incredulity at Petruccio's lies; giving in reluctantly because she knows she has no alternative; struggling mightily to release herself from Petruccio's grasp as he describes their

supposed “bargain”; or some combination of the above. Another possibility is that Petruccio’s reworking of Kate’s character as kind and loving and his portrayal of himself as a caring provider appeals to Kate’s desire for affection and offers her a possible escape from the untenable family situation in which she finds herself.

Kate’s additional silences in act 3 bear out the latter possibility. When Petruccio fails to arrive for the wedding ceremony, Kate appropriates for herself the familial shame that might accrue—turning “this shame of ours,” as Baptista describes it, to “No shame but mine” (3.2.7, 8)—and further bewails her personal shame in being legally betrothed to a madman. Why should a woman who is apparently unashamed of her reputation as a shrew be so keenly embarrassed that her husband-to-be is late to the marriage ceremony? Rather than railing at the father who has forced this crazy match, as might be expected of the shrew, she contents herself with one brief “I told you, he was a frantic fool,” and she exits weeping, as she did earlier in the scene with Bianca (3.2.12). She is then noticeably absent when Petruccio finally arrives, wildly attired, and does not reappear until after the off-stage marriage.¹¹ Indeed, she makes only a minimal appearance even in Gremio’s report of the ceremony, which focuses on Petruccio’s outrageous and blasphemous behavior. Then, after making a brief and futile attempt to assert her will about remaining for her own marriage feast, even silencing her father in the attempt, she is herself again silenced by Petruccio’s posturing. His speech indicates that she does indeed “look big, . . . stamp, . . . stare, . . . [and] fret,” yet amazingly she does not speak as he relegates her to the status of “My household stuff” and removes her from the imagined thieves that have beset them (3.3.99, 102). My point is that, as

Shakespeare represents her, Kate is not always shrewish. She may be beating Petruccio on the back as he carries her away, like Elizabeth Taylor does in the Zeffirelli adaptation of the play, but she offers no serious vocal objection to his behavior. If the shrew is defined primarily by her excessive and disorderly use of language, Kate's behavior in many instances does not qualify. Yet the male characters about her are unable to read such nuances in her behavior.¹²

Equally clear is the inability of Bianca's suitors successfully to read the difference between Kate's supposed shrewishness and Bianca's apparent submission. As Wayne observes, Bianca adopts a double deception by seeming obedient when she is, in fact, not (172).¹³ While the contrast between Kate's and Bianca's speaking styles has been frequently noted, close attention to Bianca's language has been a more recent phenomenon. Fineman detects two kinds of female language at work in the play, one (like Kate's) that is distinctly verbal, and the other (Bianca's) that is more visual (133-35). Patricia Parker carefully examines the various *cambio* (exchanges or inversions) that occur during Bianca's music and Latin lessons in act 3, scene 1, and concludes that Bianca's control and intractability in that scene forecasts her later shrewishness (205). Kate, she says, is simply the play's "*designated shrew*" (200).

This distinction is evident from the first scene proper when the sisters' "froward[ness]" and "silence" are immediately opposed to one another (1.1.69, 70). Bianca's silence, evidence of "Maid's mild behaviour and sobriety," is what first attracts Lucentio (1.1.71). Furthermore, her first speech—indeed her only speech in this scene—is extremely deferential to both her sister and her father, causing Lucentio to exalt her as

the goddess of wisdom, Minerva (see 1.1.80-84). Even her commanding and authoritative tone in her lessons fails to alert Lucentio and Hortensio that they have misread her. For instance, her complaint when they begin to fight over her—"I'll not be tied to hours nor 'pointed times, / But learn my lessons *as I please myself*" (3.1.19-20; emphasis added)—is remarkably like Katherine's refusal to leave her wedding celebration—"I will not go today, / No, nor tomorrow—not *till I please myself*" (3.3.80; emphasis added)—yet Bianca is still viewed by the male characters as the submissive sister and Kate as the shrewish one. Although the scene displays a concern with reading on several levels as the men attempt to teach Bianca to read music and Latin, and as they attempt to read her potential interest in them, both suitors fail miserably in reading her.

Wayne explains the complicated nature of the shrew as a literary character: "The character certainly arose from a patriarchal society and a hierarchical view of marriage, and she was often used to affirm those structures; but she was also the very best character to call those structures into question when kings and husbands misused their power" ("Refashioning" 182). This view of the shrew as both affirming and questioning existing patriarchal structures, as both perpetuating and reforming the status quo, is useful in dealing with Katherine's final speech. Whether we read her final speech as conciliatory or ironic, whether we interpret it as her conscious use of new rhetorical strategies to gain some measure of freedom within marriage or as a surrender of all agency to a verbally and emotionally abusive husband (questions to which I will return), Katherine the shrew easily wins a handsome wager by obeying Petruccio's command and speaking eloquently of the duties a wife owes her husband. On the other hand,

Bianca, who initially appears the ideal daughter and by far the more desirable mate, reveals her inner shrewishness as soon as she is safely married. Hortensio's Widow, too, participates in this revolt against wifely duty, although perhaps less unpredictably, given stereotypes of demanding widows in the period.

As suggested above, the play concerns itself with male characters' (mis)reading of females and with the attendant difficulties of placing them in comfortable, well-worn categories. This concern is related to Petruccio's attempt to remake Katherine into a more acceptable wife. Their opposing views of marriage are most clearly seen in their argument over the wedding feast. Kate, as the resisting wife who will "please" herself, goes head to head with Petruccio, who views her as his possession: "my goods, my chattels. . . . my house / My household stuff, my field, my barn" (3.3.101-02). Bringing this discord into some semblance of concord is Petruccio's rhetorical training of Kate, his remaking of her from shrew to submissive wife.

A number of scholars have observed Petruccio's role in teaching Kate, which begins in earnest once the couple reaches his country home in Verona.¹⁴ Lorna Hutson illustrates the link between management of the wife and management of her discourse: just as husbandry for a sixteenth-century scholar involves "using and ordering a discourse," so for a husband it involves "using and ordering a wife and household" (93). Thus, Petruccio's management of Kate includes a distinct rhetorical component, clearly indebted to the humanistic educational methods of the period. Kate's training has been compared specifically to the role-playing of schoolboys by Megan Little (85). Hutson also describes the common humanistic practice of encouraging interpretation through

“exercise of the reader’s judgment and invention in the selection and transformation of elements of the text into *exempla* applicable to future occasions for the production of persuasive discourse” (92). Kate seems clearly to select and transform certain elements of Petruccio’s discourse in this fashion. But what is the effect when women appropriate discursive elements of male speech as bases for their own future performances? As Little emphasizes, women’s training in rhetoric might occasion considerable nervousness, as does Petruccio’s inadvertent rhetorical education of Kate (88).

Petruccio never specifically sets out to teach Kate to speak persuasively. He desires merely to make her submissive. However, since the submissive wife is defined largely on the basis of her speech, his training of Kate has the unintended consequence of a slippery-tongued wife. In his soliloquy soon after arriving in Verona, Petruccio reveals his intentions to “curb” Kate’s “mad and headstrong humour” and to force her to “stoop” to his authority (4.1.189, 171). This is accomplished through a series of exempla in which Petruccio carefully models appropriate verbal responses for his new wife while withholding something she desires until she complies with his wishes. In the scene with the haberdasher and tailor, for instance, he purposely provokes her by taunting her with a fashionable cap and then taking it from her. Although Kate has been rather circumspect with Petruccio since leaving Verona, this produces an angry speech from her, one predicated upon her freedom as a rational, if emotional, adult. Note the number of words dealing with speech and its reception in a mere eight lines:

Why, sir, I trust I may have leave to *speak*,
And *speak* I will. I am no child, no babe.

Your betters have *endured* me *say my mind*,
 And if you cannot, best you *stop your ears*.
 My *tongue* will *tell* the anger of my heart,
 Or else my heart concealing it will break,
 And rather than it shall I will *be free*

Even to the uttermost as I please in *words*. (4.3.73-80; emphasis added)

Petruccio, however, gently redirects her anger by pretending that it is aimed at the cap, rather than at him. Next, he criticizes the tailor's fashioning of her gown. When she complains, "Belike you mean to make a puppet of me," Petruccio similarly misunderstands this as criticism of the tailor rather than of himself, thereby substituting a more appropriate object for her critique and also indirectly rebuking her "monstrous arrogance" in his own dress-down of the tailor (4.3.103, 106). And, just in case these exchanges seem a bit obtuse, he is more straightforward at the end of the scene: "Look what I speak, or do, or think to do, / You are still crossing it" (4.3.186-87).

On the return trip to Padua, Kate not only readily conforms to her husband's instruction, she also gradually takes some performative license within the confines of the "goodly speech" the parameters of which Petruccio has outlined (2.1.255). When Petruccio purposely confuses moon and sun, Kate at first contradicts him, saying, "I know it is the sun that shines so bright" (4.6.5). But when Petruccio reminds her that he is the rhetorical master of the family and that "It shall be moon, or star, or what I list," she quickly acquiesces, perhaps more out of a desire to leave Verona than to please her husband: "be it moon or sun or *what you please*, . . . Henceforth I vow it shall be so for

me” (4.6.13-15; emphasis added). Note the pointed inversion of her earlier independence at the wedding feast: “not till *I please myself*” (3.3.80; emphasis added). Petruccio quickly tests the veracity of her pledge to give him the rhetorical advantage by calling the sun the moon and by promptly accusing her of lying when she agrees. She agrees yet again with his rapid turnabout, using much the same language as before, but adding the word *still* to indicate clearly her acknowledgment of the rules of this rhetorical game: “What you will have it named, even that it is, / And so it shall be still for Katherine” (4.6.22-23). This prompts Hortensio to congratulate Petruccio on winning what he clearly views as a battle: “Petruccio, go thy ways. The field is won” (4.6.24). And, although Petruccio does rapidly go his way in challenging Kate to address Vincentio as female, Kate warms to this rhetorical battle. Megan Little claims that in her mocking of Vincentio and perhaps of Petruccio, too, Kate successfully learns to use the antiphrasis and hyperbole to which Petruccio has subjected her all along (93-94). When commanded to “embrace” Vincentio as a “Fair lovely maid,” Kate plays the role with gusto, freely embellishing the enticing characteristics of the “budding virgin” and even complimenting the man lucky enough to win her as “his lovely bedfellow,” perhaps a back-handed compliment to Petruccio and, therefore, to herself as well (4.6.34-35, 38, 43). Again, when Petruccio reverses course, accusing her of madness in talking to an old man so, she quickly follows suit, begging Vincentio’s pardon for “her mistaking eyes.” At the same time, though, she slyly and privately blames Petruccio in saying that she was “bedazzled with the sun,” a private reference to their previous wordplay that Vincentio could not possibly understand (4.6.46-47).

A reading of Kate's final speech is, of course, key to an interpretation of the play, and much critical ink has been spilled in trying to come to grips with its tone.¹⁵ I would like to suggest that both the ambiguity inherent in the text and the continued critical debate it fosters are direct results of the male ambivalence and anxiety associated with women's speech in the period. Kate's final speech, though submissive on its surface, is a parry in a continuing battle of the sexes. Based on the speech's dramatic context, on its internal war imagery, and on contemporary evidence for the play's interpretation, I read Kate as clearly untamed in spite of Petruccio's belief that he has bridled her successfully.

The dramatic context of Kate's final speech calls into question a straightforward reading. Kate's is the lengthiest speech of the play, offered subsequent to the playful, often ironic obedience she has gleaned from Petruccio's previous instruction. Further, it occurs in the most emphatic position within the play, giving Kate the last word, as it were.¹⁶ Rather than the disobedient Widow and Bianca being instructed in obedience privately by their new husbands, or by some other male authority figure (or even a woman with considerable experience of marriage), they are lectured publicly here by a newlywed female with a questionable reputation, all in the context of winning a conventional wager on wifely obedience. It strains credulity to think that such a speech would not end with a wink.

In addition, even as Kate obeys Petruccio in offering a highly conventional description of the good wife, the speech's irony, martial imagery, and hyperbole call into question the very obedience that it advocates. The opening of Kate's speech is an ironic echoing of Petruccio's speech in act 3, scene 3. Kate begins by marking the "threat'ning,

unkind brow[s]” and “scornful glances” of the other new wives in much the same way that Petruccio remarked her own fretting behavior earlier (5.2.140-41). She also imitates his use of series for emphasis, but, whereas Petruccio’s series employs anticlimax—“my house, / My household-stuff, my field, my barn, / My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything” (3.3.101-03)—her usage relies on an opposed, and therefore ironic, climactic movement—“thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, / Thy head, thy sovereign” (5.2.150-51). Her depiction of a husband who “commits his body / To painful labour both by sea and land” to protect and provide for a wife who lies “warm at home, secure and safe” comically and ironically contradicts her experience of a marriage in which Petruccio has made every effort to discomfit her in order to break her to his will (5.2.152-53, 155). The martial imagery that she introduces in the latter half of the speech in a cursory nod to male superiority also underscores the continuing battle of the sexes with which we are left if we understand Kate as only superficially tamed in this final scene. Although Kate emphasizes woman’s weakness, she nevertheless draws attention to her “mind,” her “heart,” and her “reason,” appearing to dismiss attributes that she clearly values (5.2.174-75).

Thus, as she speaks the final hyperbolic sequence, her stooping to Petruccio becomes the ultimate performance, at once acquiescing to her husband’s commands to appear before the assembled guests to instruct the wayward wives and evading submission at the same time:

. . . now I see our lances are but straws,
Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare,

That seeming to be most which we indeed least are.

Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,

And place your hands below your husband's foot (5.2.177-81)

Katherine's words here are decidedly ambiguous, her hyperbolic excess calling into question the verity of her claims of weakness and suggesting that she is indeed "most" what she least "seems" to be; i.e., she is not at all the submissive wife. The phrase "vail your stomachs" is usually glossed similarly to "lower your pride," as in the *Norton* edition. But this phrase is also susceptible to alternative readings. The phrase *to utter one's stomach*, current from 1537 to 1604, meant "to disclose one's inmost thoughts." *Veil*, in the sense of to "cover" or "conceal" was often spelled interchangeably with *vail*.¹⁷ So an additional reading of Kate's line might be "to veil one's inmost thoughts" rather than to utter them—in effect, exactly what an ironic reading of the speech does. Kate at this point is no longer the shrew, nor is she the silent wife. Rather she registers her disapproval of the submissive role she is expected to perform even as she performs it.

While we have no known extant reactions to early productions of Shakespeare's *Shrew*, which editor Jean Howard believes to have been written in 1592 or earlier (*Taming* 167), contemporary commentary does exist in the form of another play, a sequel of sorts written two decades later by John Fletcher. *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed*, written and first performed in 1611, continues the story of the widower Petruchio, who has just married the witty, young Maria, and acts as a marker of audience reception for Shakespeare's play. The action of Fletcher's comedy is relocated from

Padua to London, and Petruchio's deceased first wife remains unnamed, but sufficient parallels exist to see this play as a response to and a reversal of the earlier taming drama, prompting one recent critic to view *The Woman's Prize* as "the first documented 'revisionist' reading" of *The Taming of the Shrew* (Petzold 160). The main plot of *The Woman's Prize* involves the women barricading themselves in Maria's room to prevent Petruchio's consummation of their marriage until he has been tamed. The action includes betting among the men on whether Petruchio will succeed (a parallel to the wager in *Shrew's* act 5) as well as Maria's outlandish dress and behavior as a prostitute (a gender-inverted parallel to Petruccio's dress and behavior at his wedding in the earlier play). In addition, the subplot revolves around Maria's younger sister, Livia, who pretends to be willing to marry an old, rich suitor, Moroso, while secretly favoring young Rowland, playing the two of them against each other, much as Bianca does with her suitors. Early on, Moroso describes Petruchio's first wife in terms that leave no doubt as to her continued shrewishness after the wedding and Petruchio's mighty efforts to contain her:

. . . What though his other wife,
 Out of her most abundant stubbornness,
 Out of her daily hue and cries upon him
 (For sure she was a rebel), turned his temper,
 And force him blow as high as she? (1.1.16-20)¹⁸

That the two plays were performed as a pair for King Charles I and Henrietta Maria on 26 and 28 November 1633 establishes a perceived relationship between them in the contemporary mindset (Aspinall 19-20).¹⁹ This suggests that Shakespeare's audiences

would not have been surprised in the least by an interpretation of Kate as never really tamed.

The theatrical bent of Petruccio's training of Kate and the performative aspects of her final speech have not gone unnoticed.²⁰ Especially interesting are Barbara Hodgdon's comments on the play's reception and inevitable "reconfiguration" by its readers and viewers, particularly women (351). In analyzing *Shrew*'s stage history, Hodgdon claims "that something like a new characterology is in process, taking place through and being shaped by the bodies of the performers," and, further, that "such reauthorized appearances and reembodiments" are a crucial component of early modern theater (380). The play's emphasis on theatricality—the meta-theatricality of the Induction scenes, the focus on role-playing throughout, and the performativity associated with both Petruccio and Katherine—invites questions about what audiences might take away from such performance, a question to which I will return subsequently.

Dramatic Manipulations of Silence: *Epicene*

For more than a hundred years after its first performance in 1609 or 1610, *Epicene* was one of Jonson's most popular plays, and, like *The Taming of the Shrew*, it continues to be controversial. Certainly, the earliest controversy involved its suppression by James I because of the presumed reference to Arbella Stuart, mentioned earlier (101-03). The titillating publicity this undoubtedly caused and the play's later acceptance as a model for Restoration comedy may have contributed to its popularity (Summers 233-35). Claude Summers outlines the continuing interpretive arguments surrounding *Epicene*, including whether it can be read as "misogynistic" or "protofeminist," whether

“homophobic or homoerotic,” and whether Jonson may have identified more closely with Truewit or Dauphine as the play’s moral center (235, 244-46). Certainly the cultural and dramatic climate in which the play was produced differs markedly in certain respects from that which engendered *The Taming of the Shrew*. For instance, James’ court is considered to have been more openly misogynistic than Elizabeth’s, and some historians and literary critics have seen this period as generally more restrictive for women than the period of Shakespeare’s early comedies. Others seem to see Jonson himself as the cause of the play’s apparent misogyny. However, separating Jonson’s attitudes from those that he thought would satisfy his patrons and his audiences is impossible.²¹ Jonson’s play was written for the indoor theater at Whitefriars, typically drawing a more genteel, fashionable crowd than might be expected in a larger outdoor amphitheater, and for performance by the Children of Her Majesty’s Revels, rather than by an adult acting troupe (Rackin, “Androgyny” 31-32). All of these factors doubtless inform *Epicene* to some degree, yet the overriding concern with women’s speech remains remarkably similar to that of *The Taming of the Shrew* two decades earlier.

While Katherine moves from shrewishness to apparent submission with the minor characters taking the reverse course in Shakespeare’s play, an opposite, but complementary movement occurs in Jonson’s. Here the main female character shifts from silence to shrewishness, and the minor female characters, reviled and ridiculed for their talkativeness and attempts at learning, are shocked into total silence. The revelation that *Epicene* is, in fact, male suggests the utter impossibility of a silent woman even as it orchestrates the silence of the “real” females. Although both plays ultimately suggest the

inherent shrewishness and uncontrollability of women, *Epicene* lacks the playful attitude of *Shrew* and leaves artifice as the only option for women, encouraging them to don acceptable speech in much the same way as they apply paint or put on clothing²²—an even more reductive approach to female gender construction than in the earlier play.

The centrality of noise or its lack within *Epicene* and its perhaps inevitable linkage to women and their inappropriate use of speech has been well rehearsed.²³ Huston Hallahan's early study illustrates Jonson's use of the classical rhetorical models of eloquence (which he aligns with Truewit) and silence (aligned with Dauphine Eugenie) as complementary components of proper speech (126). However, Hallahan succumbs to the tendency (still common in his era) to naturalize the association of silence with ideal wifely duty. More recent critical interpretations have varied markedly, ranging from Rosalind Miles' claim of "brute antifeminism" in Jonson's play to Rebecca Merrens' argument for a more complicated view in which Jonson brings to the fore untenable attitudes toward women's speech in the period (Miles 115; Merrens 256-58).²⁴ While Jonson's presentation of women's talkativeness and silence may be somewhat less ambiguous than Shakespeare's, it is certainly a complex and fascinating dialectic that merits careful examination.

All of the female characters in *Epicene* are presented as hermaphroditical, their "masculine" characteristics seen as most pronounced when they offend. The hermaphroditic nature of the titular character is an inside joke most readily available to Jonson's more learned male contemporaries. The noun *epicene*, meaning "one who partakes of the characteristics of both sexes," is taken from the descriptive term for

nouns in Latin and Greek that, “without changing their grammatical gender, may denote either sex.”²⁵ The audience is treated to a character whose gender construction and whose rhetorical constructions swing from one extreme to the other. When first introduced to Epicene, Dauphine’s rich uncle, Morose, who can tolerate no noise but his own, is thrilled by her soft speech and her willingness to be guided by him as her potential husband. Morose has to ask her repeatedly to “speak out” and “Pray you, rise a note” in order for her responses to be audible even to his highly sensitive ears, and he values the “wealthy dowry” he believes he has gained in her silence (2.5.34, 60, 80, 88). In spite of the ridiculous extremes to which Morose goes in his avoidance of noise, his preference for a silent wife replicates conduct literature advice and stresses the economic value of a submissive, pliable wife.

Immediately upon their marriage, however, the “manifest woman” in Epicene is freed, much to Morose’s chagrin (3.4.41). Epicene objects vehemently and vocally to his mistreatment of the parson and of his servant Mute, saying “I’ll have none of this coacted, unnatural dumbness in my house, in a family where I govern” (3.4.51-53). Her clear challenge to his governance, and Morose’s resulting comparisons of her to the warrior queens Penthesilea and Semiramis, and later to an Amazon, ally her freedom of speech with her masculine usurpation of household rule (see 3.4.54, 3.5.39). After Truewit and Clerimont divert Sir Amorous La Foole’s noisy feast to Morose’s house in order to celebrate the wedding properly and to antagonize Morose further, Morose’s worst fears seem to have been realized. He now must fend off not only Epicene’s verbal volleys, but the din of banqueters and musicians, too. In his thinking, however, all his

woes are tied to his marriage. He complains that “Strife and tumult are the dowry that comes with a wife” (4.4.23). And he associates Epicene’s voice with her leaky female body: “She is like a conduit pipe that will gush out with more force when she opens again” (4.4.78-79). Morose reviles a talking wife as hermaphroditical, yet simultaneously expects all wives to be outspoken, placing all wives categorically in an untenable and perpetually suspect position. Although Truewit and Clerimont openly aggravate Morose, for instance by reporting that Epicene snores and talks in her sleep, Truewit also chastises Morose in apparent sincerity for his unrealistic expectations. He warns Morose: “you would be friends with your wife upon unconscionable terms, her silence” (4.4.43-44). Mario DiGangi characterizes Morose’s marriage to Epicene as sodomitical, not just because Epicene, as we later learn, is in fact male, but because of its social deviance and disorderliness (185). Rather than reigning in his unruly wife, Morose flees to the rafters. Truewit’s comment, therefore, illustrates a larger deviance from social norms, that of an “unconscionable” silence, suggesting the abnormal degree of quiet Morose seeks from a wife.

As in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the minor female characters in *Epicene* move in an opposing direction. As Miles observes, both the Collegiates and Mrs. Otter seem repugnant in Jonson’s view, yet they offend primarily in their speech (117). The Collegiates, led by Madam Haughty, are a group of wives who live apart from their husbands and, eager to advance their middling social status, display their erudition and dress in entertaining witty and fashionable young men. Although the painting and perfuming the women perform becomes the subject of the song, “Still to be neat,” these

women's chief offense is their outspokenness: they "cry down or up what they like or dislike in a brain or a fashion with most masculine—or rather hermaphroditical—authority" (1.1.75-77). The Collegiates' usurpation of the male prerogative to speech makes them not "masculine," but something in between male and female—"hermaphroditical"—less definable and, therefore, more threatening, like the not easily classified beast after which Madam Centaur is named. The anxiety provoked by the Collegiates' outspokenness is echoed comically in Truewit's description of the woman who hastily puts her wig on backwards and converses for "an hour with that reversed face, when I still looked when she should talk from the t'other side" (1.1.130-31). Like this comic two-mouthed female Janus, it is the unpredictability of the Collegiates' speech that makes it suspect and troubling.

Mrs. Otter is portrayed as similarly outspoken and hermaphroditic. Married to the drinker and gambler Captain Otter, whom Dauphine ridicules as "animal amphibium," she is depicted as dominating her husband to the extent that she overtakes his masculine identity: "she *is* Captain Otter" (1.4.26, 30; emphasis added). She so overshadows her husband that he must beg "*pauca verba*" (a few words), in her presence, and speak only "under [her] correction" (3.1.1, 9). When he argues against her prohibition of his prized drinking cups at the feast that her kinsman La Foole has planned in her honor, she does not hesitate to remind him of their rather unusual marital contract, which places him in a distinctly servile position within the household: "Is this according to the instrument when I married you? That I should be princess and reign in mine own house, and you would be my subject and obey me?" (3.1.28-30). As Juana Green argues, a reading of

Mrs. Otter as “merely a shrew” is complicated by the considerable property she has brought to the marriage (278-79), which Otter later identifies as “six thousand pound” (4.2.79). Yet the wits mock her to her face, wryly praising her “excellent choice phrase” and flattering her as “the only authentical courtier, that is not naturally bred one” (3.2.26, 28-29). Her “ominous” dream, which reveals a series of social embarrassments in London, offers an image of herself in hermaphroditical dress, with “a crimson satin doublet and black velvet skirts” (3.3.59-60, 72-73). But her fine suit is ruined by a passing horse, perhaps expressing not only her subconscious anxieties about her social status but also her consciousness of crossing gender boundaries. Not surprisingly, the society of the Collegiates appeals to Mrs. Otter in her attempts to advance her social standing and to thwart her husband’s independence.

Delighted that Epicene “has found her tongue” subsequent to her marriage, the Collegiates and Mrs. Otter are eager to admit her to their society (3.6.35). As the guests arrive at Morose’s house for the feast, these women take Epicene aside and catechize her in the appropriate means of “taming” her husband (4.3.26-27). They instruct her in a feminized version of a (male) *carpe diem* fantasy in which a wife continues to court many suitors, while controlling her husband and avoiding the limitations imposed by childbirth. If a woman is foolish enough to reject her lovers, her verbal interactions, which might revolve around such activities as letterwriting and attending plays, become more limited also. Centaur asks, “who will wait on us to coach then? Or write, or tell us the news then? Make anagrams of our names, and invite us to the Cockpit, and kiss our hands all the play time . . . ?” (4.3.44-47). While the Collegiates continue to instruct their

novice, the wits delight in involving the Collegiates in the prank they play on Sir Amorous and John Daw. Truewit criticizes them in an aside to Dauphine:

Why, all their actions are governed by crude opinion without reason or cause. They know not why they do anything, but as they are informed, believe, judge, praise, condemn, love, hate, and—in emulation one of another—do all these things alike. (4.6.60-63)

Newman examines Jonson's use of the grammatical series in heaping blame on women for their negative traits, resulting in a generalized sense of lack (188-89). Here, Truewit enumerates the empty nature of the women's talk and the vapidness of its influence. As Newman claims, "the play attacks 'hermaphroditical' talking women, women who transgress the culturally constructed codes of behavior believed appropriate to them in early modern England" (191).

As in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the authority of the male to shape female discourse is important. But, in *Epicene*, the role of the authoritative male as dramatist is heightened and extended, perhaps as a result of Jonson's seemingly more self-interested view of his craft.²⁶ Various male figures vie for control of female speech, which, as we've already seen, they view as incessant and inappropriate. Jonson first reveals those who are unsuccessful in their attempts to appropriate women's speech. For example, Epicene's foppish and pretentious suitor John Daw is mocked by Dauphine because he simultaneously "desires that she [Epicene] should talk and be free, and commends her silence" (1.3.17-18). In the scene in which we first meet Epicene, Daw parrots the prevailing wisdom of conduct literature of the day in a poem he has written in her honor:

DAW. [*reads*] Silence in woman is like speech in man,

Deny't who can.

DAUPHINE. Not I, believe it. Your reason, sir.

DAW. Nor is 't a tale

That female vice should be a virtue male,

Or masculine vice a female virtue be.

You shall it see

Proved with increase:

I know to speak and she to hold her peace. (2.3.120-28)

Daw's opposition of male speech to female silence allows him absolute control to interpret Epicene's silence in whatever fashion he chooses, and his control becomes an act of procreation based merely on his desire, regardless of her consent. Daw explains the phrase "with increase" to Dauphine, saying it names the time "when I court her for the common cause of mankind, and she says nothing but *consentire videtur* [seems to consent], and in time is *gravida* [pregnant]" (2.3.131-33). The effect of putting this notion of sexual control over the silent woman in the mouth of a character who is ridiculed soundly by the main characters of the play is complex. Dauphine appears to agree with Daw in order to draw him out, presumably to expose the fallaciousness of his thinking. Epicene speaks only three times in the entire scene, each time to encourage Daw's dismal rhetorical and poetic efforts, here imploring Daw to read the verse again. She, too, seems to consent to Daw's interpretation of herself. But, as the audience knows, she already has consented to bestow her favors elsewhere.

Morose's attempts to control Epicene's speech are similarly ridiculed. In their first meeting, which like the previous interview with Daw is dominated by male speech, Morose carefully questions her about her habits, with particular emphasis on her speech habits. She indicates her willingness not to "take pleasure in [her] tongue, which is a woman's chiefest pleasure," according to Morose; to avoid the witty sexual banter that is the norm at court; and to allow him to conduct all business with the tailors to make her the foremost in fashion (2.5.38-39). The latter part of this agreement provides a fine contrast to the scene in *The Taming of the Shrew* when Petruccio silences Kate in front of the haberdasher and tailor. Like Daw (and like Petruccio), Morose wants to own his wife's speech. But, as Hallahan comments, he proves later unwilling to train his wife in appropriate wifely rhetoric, refusing "to exert a husband's authority" in controlling her verbal barrage (124). Instead, Morose helplessly accepts the commonplace that "Strife and tumult are the dowry that comes with a wife" (4.4.23). Like Daw's position on women's speech, Morose's is one to be ridiculed, not a view that seems to be seriously endorsed by the play.

Instead the play seems to emphasize the constructed nature of gender and gendered speech, even as it somewhat maliciously pokes fun at such constructions, especially in its placement of the female characters at the mercy of the male wits' manipulations.²⁷ The wits, especially Truewit and Dauphine, attempt to manage the audience's interpretation of the female characters, composing them in much the same way as Otter claims that his wife assembles her "self" on a daily basis: "She takes herself asunder still when she goes to bed, into some twenty boxes, and about next day

noon is put together again” (4.2.98-100). Grace Tiffany describes the detached male wits in Jonson’s plays as “authorial figures,” suggesting that their “practical jokes perform a ‘stripping’ function, exposing other characters’ androgyny as vain affectation, or ‘humors’” (125-26). While this authorial power works to reveal the imbecility of Daw, La Foole, and Morose in this play, the female characters seem the more pointed focus. For instance, in act 4, Truewit acts as dramatist, arranging the plot of a “tragicomedy” in which he ridicules both Daw and La Foole, with Clerimont and Dauphine hidden behind the arras and acting as chorus between scenes, as it were. Dauphine prefers to leave the ladies in their “state of ignorance” regarding the dueling knights, but Truewit instructs Clerimont to fetch them to oversee the climax of his play and intimates to them that the entire plot is “Sir Dauphine’s engine,” apparently in order to enhance his friend’s reputation, and perhaps his marriage prospects, in their eyes (4.5.231, 4.6.44). This is surprising given Truewit’s professed disregard for the Collegiates and their easily swayed opinions. Nevertheless, Truewit’s control of the action appears so pervasive that at least one critic, Philip Mirabelli, argues for an interpretation of him as Jonson’s “moral commentator,” saying that he “only *seems* ‘the master-foole’” but is, in fact, aware from the start of Epicene’s true identity (330).

Indeed, Truewit controls much of the play’s final action. A further example of his stage management is employing Otter to play a lawyer, and the barber Cutbeard a theologian, in order to fool Morose into declaring his impotence in order to obtain a divorce. However, Dauphine is revealed as the true master of revels in the final scene as he first tricks Morose into naming Dauphine as his heir and, only then, undresses

Epicene, as it were, to reveal the boy actor beneath.²⁸ Truewit has the last word, as he accuses Dauphine of “concealing this part of the plot,” and he embarrasses Daw and La Foole, whom he earlier had goaded into confessing their sexual indiscretions with this supposed woman (5.4.222-23). But it is Dauphine’s plot, not Truewit’s, which wholly silences the Collegiates, leaving them, as Truewit puts it, “mute upon this new metamorphosis” (5.4.240). Dauphine’s boy has infiltrated their ranks, committing “espionage,” as Helms calls it (68); thus Truewit is able somewhat cruelly to joke, “we’ll all undertake for his secrecy, that can speak so well of his silence” (5.4.245-46). Epicene’s silence at this juncture and Dauphine’s appropriation of even the women’s private talk amongst themselves effectively deny women any voice in the marital relationship while simultaneously and ironically proving Morose’s fear that there is no such thing as a silent woman. She’s only a boy in drag.

Shrews, Silent Women, and Boy Actors

This silent boy in drag seems a marked contrast to the triumphant boy actor crowing his part as Kate and returns me to the question I posed earlier of the effect of such metatheatrical moments on the audience. These two images, at first glance, offer two opposed aspects of the speech-silence dialectic that I have been exploring here, but, upon further examination, reveal two more or less interchangeable images: two remarkably similar cross-dressed boys, one explicitly exposed, his wig removed onstage, and the other exposed by implication, through his over-the-top performance. What is the effect of the audience’s awareness of the boy actor in these two instances?

Considerable attention has been paid to the boy actor on the English stage.

Stephen Orgel describes the phenomenon as a uniquely English solution to the general European disapproval of female actresses, in which “the interchangeability of the sexes is an essential assumption” (“Nobody’s Perfect” 7-8, 13). Anti-theatricalists in the period feared the effeminacy that might result in the cross-dressed boy actor and also the erotic response such transvestism might arouse in male spectators (15-17). However, Orgel concludes that the chief anxiety compelling such criticism of the theater concerns the threats posed to both men and women by *female* sexuality:

Homosexuality in this culture appears to have been less threatening than heterosexuality, and only in part because it had fewer consequences and was easier to desexualize. The reason always given for the prohibition of women from the stage was that their chastity would thereby be compromised, which is understood to mean that they would become whores. Behind the outrage of public modesty is a real fear of women’s sexuality, and more specifically, of its power to evoke men’s sexuality.

(26)

Aside from the objections by anti-theatricalists, little contemporary evidence documenting audience reaction to cross-dressed boy actors has survived. Dymna Callaghan argues convincingly that “perfect similitude” was never the goal in representing women on stage, but rather the aim was an aesthetic in which “[f]emininity was *defined in and as a relation to* masculinity and bore only a troublesome and secondary commensurability with women” (*Shakespeare Without Women* 51). Interestingly for my purposes here, this construction of women was highly dependent

upon voice: the castrati of Europe produced an “ideal vocal aesthetic” that the English stage mimicked through the use of boys as female impersonators until such time as their voices changed, when they must either take on male roles or leave the stage altogether (52-53, 64-71). Furthermore, audiences apparently were well attuned to such issues. Callaghan reports “no recorded complaints about the *appearance* of male actresses in the Renaissance, only complaints about their sound” (71). Although conceding that audiences were probably well aware of the cross-dressed boys’ performance of females, Rackin claims that the effect on the audience is unclear, but that the boys’ performances were accepted as both capable and convincing (*Shakespeare and Women* 72-74). On the other hand, Jardine argues that the “considerable moral uneasiness” cross-dressing caused some viewers and commentators indicates that boys playing female roles was generally not accepted as “verisimilitude” (*Still Harping* 57). She continues, “The ordinary playgoer does not keep constantly in his or her mind the cross-dressing implications of ‘boys in women’s parts,’ but it is nevertheless available to the dramatist as a reference point for dramatic irony, or more serious *double entendre*” (60). The uses and purposes of cross-dressing also may have changed over time. Helms argues that the character of stage androgyny varied from a distinctive femininity during Elizabeth’s reign to a more distinctly male prerogative in the more misogynistic Jacobean period (59-61). Such differences account to some degree for the differences in the stage presentations of *Epicene* and *Katherine*.

Several factors argue for our attention to the boy actor at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Maureen Quilligan contends that a final return to the metatheatrical frame

of the Induction would have undercut Kate's conformity to social discourse by highlighting the artifice of the boy actor (223). But if we read Kate as conforming outwardly only, does the attention this calls to her inward state also alert us to the gendered body that enacts it? Newman highlights the sexual ambivalence created by representations of linguistically powerful women in patriarchal culture, an effect that she calls the "female dramatizable." She claims that this representation, which simultaneously reproduces patriarchy and rebels against it, is deconstructed by its transvestite presentation (99-100). Michael Shapiro, too, believes that the likely doubling of male performers in female roles would heighten the "deconstruction of Kate as an icon of wifely obedience" ("Framing the Taming" 229). The possibility of doubling and its effects on audience interpretation have been further explored by Juliet Dusinberre, who suggests that Shakespeare may have rewritten the earlier *Taming of a Shrew* when Richard Burbage joined the Chamberlain's Men in 1594 or 1595, allowing Burbage to double as the Lord of the Induction and Petruccio, while Burbage's apprentice might play both the Lord's page and Kate (77-79). If Dusinberre is correct and the roles were doubled in this fashion, the audience cannot help but be aware of the "squeaking" boy beneath Kate's submissive guise. Dusinberre further emphasizes that the boy apprentice gained a temporary rise in status by playing a lady, while at the same time the women in the audience participate, however temporarily and vicariously, in his theatrical power (79-81).

Jonson draws attention to the boy actor who played Epicene still more pointedly than Shakespeare does, creating a considerable amount of gender slippage. Richmond

Barbour, for example, describes the frequent “performances of sexual indeterminacy” in Jonsonian theater, yet claims that the threat of such slippage was reduced by its presentation within a children’s company (1007, 1014-15). If gender slippage made female theatricality less frightening, it simultaneously may have increased the potential for male homoeroticism. For instance, Steve Brown highlights the susceptibility of the boy actors to erotic attention because of their subservience (246). He connects the “Beautiful Boy” trope with simultaneous occurrences of “Ganymede,” “ingle,” and “catamite” in the period to explore what he calls the “boy/varlet/whore” triad (250-53). With Clerimont’s “ingle at home” (1.1.24), Brown claims that Jonson naturalizes the male ingle as a parallel and equivalent form to the female mistress and perhaps leads the audience to read Epicene as Dauphine’s ingle in the end (254-55). Although effeminate men are seen as “relatively unthreatening” in *Epicene*, masculine women are clearly threatening (Barbour 1015). To some degree, Jonson’s emphasis on the constructed nature of femininity neutralizes this threat by suggesting that the hermaphroditical Collegiates can be re-constructed in more feminine fashion. And this is exactly what happens: Dauphine emasculates these too-masculine women by silencing them with a boy.

In the final scene, then, it all comes down to the “technical virtuosity, gifted playing,” of the boy actor disguised as Epicene, and, as Richard Cave so succinctly puts it, his “living up to the conventional significations of a *dress*” (40). How different is this image of Epicene unwigged to reveal a boy, yet retaining his dress, from, for example, the puppet Dionysius in *Bartholomew Fair*, who raises his garment to reveal no sex at

all? Is this a negation of femininity, a replacement of it with burgeoning masculinity, or something else entirely? Many critics have commented on this surprise ending as offering a negative, even misogynist, view of femininity, and the total silence of Jonson's female characters at this point would seem to bear this out. For instance, Rackin claims that Jonson insists here on a strictly mimetic approach to his craft and tries to limit the "subversive potential" of both dramatic representation and women ("Androgyny" 34-35). Helms argues similarly that the absence of any emphasis on women at the play's close reinforces patriarchal authority over unruly women: "Jonson's comedy acknowledges that men have created this theatrical representation of femininity. At the same time, it also denies women any power to challenge those fantasies. Many playwrights have created theatrical worlds from which women are absent; Jonson has created a world in which they are unnecessary" (69). Others, like Brian Woolland, have argued that, at the very least, Jonson's ending encourages us to challenge the idea of the silent woman as the perfect marriage partner (130). Charles Lyons claims that Epicene undergoes a "sequential empowerment" within the play "from passive female to shrew to male" (133). But this holds true only if we view the power relations in the play as strictly hierarchical, equating male speech with power and female speech with the anxiety it produces for males. We might be tempted to read Epicene as always already empowered because always already male. In fact, Epicene is a boy, which places him in a substantially different relation to both the men and women who surround him, both onstage and off.

Further, the boy who has played so convincingly at being Epicene is himself also

silent in the end. In marked contrast to Burbage's apprentice at the close of *Taming of the Shrew*, Jonson's protégé Nathan Field is curiously mute at what might be the most propitious moment for him to display his rhetorical skills.²⁹ Why? It would seem that the pinnacle of his dramatic expertise depends on not just a single convincing speech, like that of Katherine's "submission" to Petruccio in which the male characters read what they want to read, but on a sustained act of double-crossing his audience, both within the play and within the playhouse. The boy actor is not a romantic heroine pretending to be a boy, like Rosalind or Viola, but something much more akin to the Lord's page in *Shrew*: a boy dressed as a woman, and speaking (or not speaking) the woman's part, yet all the while really playing another *boy*—a boy under the control of his lord, the dramatist, who instructs him when to speak and when to maintain silence. I would argue that *Epicene* is more about the dramatist's license to speak and to manipulate speech, especially female or "female" speech, than about the expectation that women should not speak.

However, this is not to suggest that the maleness of Jonson's theater, and indeed the early modern theater in general, cannot have been without effect on female theatergoers. The boy actors' manipulation of the appearance, gait, gesture, voice, and speech of females calls attention to itself as representation even if, as Steve Brown quips, "Shakespeare [and Jonson] could trust the boys to handle it" (244). Jean Howard has suggested that women's attendance at theatrical performances is evidence that drama allowed some room for social change, that the "average woman playgoer" was "perhaps unwittingly . . . altering gender relations" by her presence (440). Similarly, Julie Sanders claims a developing "theatrical voice" for women in Jonson's later plays as a result of

the involvement of court ladies in Henrietta Maria's masques ("‘Twill fit'" 181). In addition, based, on her own experiences of productions of *The Devil Is an Ass* and *Bartholomew Fair* in the 1990s, Sanders describes the "potential for empathy" in Jonson's female audiences (187-88). Clare McManus has explored what she calls the trope of the "Jacobean theatrical woman" in several masque texts, including Jonson's *Masque of Queens*, produced in the same year as *Epicene* (and witnessed by Arbella Stuart), as evidence of strong female influence on theater and of male performers' attempts to contain it ("When Is a Woman").³⁰ Tiffany's conclusion that *Epicene* is an attempt "to reclaim the stage androgyne's irreducibly male body from the feminizing threat of marriage, the sexualized female, and the playhouse itself" makes sense in the context of a perception of feminine encroachment on the theater (134). Rather than a "last-minute 'reduction' of the female character Epicoene to the boy actor playing her," she views the play as "a restoration of genuine, nontheatrical male identity" (134). But whether or not this is how female audience members read theatrical representations of women is another question. Orgel concludes that the misogyny of the Elizabethan theater "plays on both the male fears and the female fantasies of a patriarchal society" ("Nobody's Perfect" 26). Is it possible that, for at least some women, early modern theater drew sufficient attention to the constructed nature of gender and of theatrical representations of women to encourage instead female fantasies of independence?

Given the marked contrasts between women's marital speech in their first-person writing and representations of it on the male-authored stage, this seems not only possible, but likely. As we saw in Chapter II, women's letters and diaries show a

remarkable range of expression—from submissiveness to command, from modesty to suggestiveness, from obedience to defiance—and every possibility in between.

Theatrical representations of women, however, flatten these contours dramatically:

woman is either shrewish or silent—with few viable alternatives. This suggests, as Orgel has argued, a generalized fear of female sexuality and, further, an attempt to contain it on the English stage by demonizing or ridiculing excessive female speech, particularly wifely speech, and by valorizing its opposite. In spite of the ambiguities we have observed in the presentation, these expectations of a wife's relative silence are largely the same as the prescriptions touted in conduct books and in sermons of the period, but, if women's own first-person writing is any indication, adhered to more loosely in actual practice. The effect of this rather reductive portrayal of women's discursive agency on female theatergoers would have been complex, not least because the conditions of theater and its reception in the early modern period, as we understand them, indicate a complex interaction between actor and observer that was not dependent on verisimilitude, like modern theater, yet that nevertheless encouraged vicarious participation. Rather than a mere suspension of disbelief, the early modern theater depended heavily on the viewer's active imaginative investment. However, for women, such participation may well have been troubled by the difficulty of imagining themselves in roles that not only flattened considerably the contours of their everyday experiences, but that were played by boys rather than by other women. While some women surely failed to detect the potential ironies engendered in such a dramatic situation and may have chosen to emulate a tamed Katherine, others undoubtedly saw

such theatrical representations of themselves as decidedly false.

Arbella Stuart, as we know, did just that. Apparently objecting not only to insinuations about a relationship between herself and the supposed prince of Moldavia, but to the further suggestion of her inherent shrewishness, she succeeded in silencing her silencer. It would seem that Jonson recognized this. His response in the form of an additional prologue occasioned by “some person’s impertinent exception,” is clearly intended as one-upmanship. In implying that Stuart can write only a “libel” while he writes a “play,” he further silences the lady, although not until after she had already been silenced by her untimely death from porphyria in 1615 at age 40.³¹ In addition, his dedication of the play to her kinsman, Sir Francis Stuart, second son of the second Earl of Moray and a fellow frequenter of the Mermaid Tavern, is especially pointed:

And, when you shall consider, through the certaine hatred of some, how
much a mans innocency may bee indanger’d *by an un-certaine*
accusation; you will, I doubt not, so beginne to hate the iniquitie of such
natures, as I shall love the contumely done me, whose end was so
honorable as to be wip’d off by your sentence. (qtd. in Graves 146)

The smug assumption that Stuart’s accusation of Jonson is “uncertain,” while his own thinly veiled accusation of her shrewishness, and of women’s inherent shrewishness in general, is beyond question, is grating to contemporary sensibilities and likely would have been at least mildly suspect to any early modern woman with a modicum of education and a nodding acquaintance with the *querelle des femmes*. Granted, we do not know precisely what about Jonson’s ambiguous reference to Stuart caused her

objections, but, given the multiple rumors concerning her swirling through the court at the time, her virulent reaction to this additional bit of gossip suggests that it was something more than the linking of her name to Moldavia's. Clearly, Stuart recognized the power of the theater to shape reputations—both hers and, perhaps, also those of women in general—and she reacted powerfully. Unlike the silent *Epicene*, she spoke, and unlike the shrewish *Epicene*, she engaged the discourse about acceptable women's speech decisively and effectively. Aware of the negative constructions of women on the male stage, she silenced her accuser, if only temporarily.

We know, then, that at least one woman spoke out against a negative theatrical representation of herself. I would argue the likelihood that the feminine representations created by Jonson, Shakespeare, and others stirred objections in other female viewers in addition to Arbella Stuart. Although other women's responses to and interventions in early modern English drama have been lost, they too used their slippery tongues to voice objections, perhaps in volubility, like Kate, or in impenetrable silence, like "*Epicene*," but, more likely, somewhere in the considerable slippage between the two.

Notes

¹ All references to *Epicene* are to the Norton edition.

² See Graves; Durant (172-74); Steen (“How Subject” 61-62); Summers (233); and Maus (845n1). For the most recent biography of Stuart, see Ruth Norrington. Regretfully, Norrington does not mention this intriguing incident.

³ See also Graves; Steen (*Letters* 62n2); and Lanier (14-15).

⁴ See *OED*, defs. 2A, 1a and 3a; for further discussion, also see Underdown (119) and Dolan (*Taming* 9).

⁵ See Underdown (123); Ingram (“Scolding women” 56-59, 65); and Boose (“Scolding Brides” 185-91, 196-212).

⁶ In *Of Domesticall Duties*, treatise 1, Gouge offers an exposition of Ephesians 5 and 6 that places husbands and wives in submission to god and to each other (see especially 6-7). See also treatise 2, on the “common-mutual duties betwixt Man and Wife,” in which he emphasizes care and service of each spouse to the other as essential to wedded unity (213-66).

⁷ All references to *The Taming of the Shrew* are to the Norton edition.

⁸ For a view of the play as farce, see Heilman. On Kate as a “humanized heroine” like those of the later romantic comedies, see Bean (66).

⁹ See Dolan (*Taming* 2, 10-11); Rebhorn (318); and Amy Smith (103).

¹⁰ For interpretations of the play’s treatment of marital customs of the period, see Cook and Mikesell.

¹¹ See Sloan’s provocative article on this scene as a skimmington parody.

¹² Their apparent misreading of Kate has perhaps been reproduced in the history of criticism of the play.

¹³ Wayne suggests that this double deception was advocated in Juan Luis Vives's *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, which counsels seeming submissive as the best way to rule a husband: "A good woman by lowely obeysaunce ruleth her husbände" (qtd. in Wayne, "Refashioning" 172).

¹⁴ See, for example, Wayne ("Refashioning" 173); and Shapiro ("Framing the Taming" 223-35). See also Aspinall's summary of the play's critical reception (11-14). Rebhorn's reading, in which he figures Petruccio's sovereign speaking position as a rhetorical rape of Kate, suggests that Kate nevertheless benefits rhetorically from his example. Rather than seeing Kate as a student of rhetoric, Korda argues that Petruccio educates her as a consumer ("Household Kates"). In opposition to the notion of Petruccio's rhetorical training of his bride is Newman's suggestion that he kills Kate's spirit by "the withholding of linguistic understanding" (95).

¹⁵ Heilman first proposed the term "revisionist" for those critics who read Katherine's speech as ironic (46-47), objecting to what he saw as a trend toward "Katolatry" (55), perhaps a function of the early years of second-wave feminism. John Bean later proposed the term "anti-revisionist" for those who interpret the speech as a straightforward acknowledgment of a wife's duty to be submissive (65). These terms continue to be used to designate the two broad camps into which interpretations of this speech generally fall. For instance, Underdown (117); Boose ("*Taming*" 219-20); and Briggs (155) offer anti-revisionist readings of Kate's speech. On the other hand, Kahn

(98); Jardine (*Still Harping* 113); Newman (46-48); Wayne ("Refashioning" 172); Rebhorn (325-27); and Breitenberg (*Anxious Masculinity* 169) argue for interpretations generally considered to be revisionist in nature, although several of these readings take pains to emphasize the social limitations on Kate's untamed spirit. Others, Bean included, argue for alternative readings. For example, Bean emphasizes the "reciprocity" of marriage in her final speech (68). Hartwig stresses a similar mutuality in her analysis of the horse and rider metaphor (292). Baumlin sees a "spirit of 'play'" that carries within it a private creative exchange between the married couple ("Petruchio" 248, 250-51). Mikesell generally agrees with an anti-revisionist reading but argues that women's acceptance of the submissive role ironically empowers them (121). Moisan views Kate's speech as paradoxical, "leaving unresolved such dissonances" as those between Kate's indoctrination into patriarchy and her subversion of it (268-69). Most recently, Little argues that Kate has appropriated certain rhetorical conventions of epideictic and irony from Petruccio, yet in the end she offers a sincere gesture of obedience (96-98).

¹⁶ See, for instance, Burns (88); Wayne ("Refashioning" 171); and Amy Smith (115).

¹⁷ See *OED* for *stomach* (def. 6b, 8b); *vail* (defs. 1, 8); and *veil* (def. 1).

¹⁸ Reference is to the Norton edition.

¹⁹ See also Rasmussen's introduction to Fletcher's play (1215). Ranald (318) and Moisan (270) also comment on the perceived relationship between the two plays. Todd Lidh argues that Fletcher's play is a revision of Shakespeare's in presenting Kate as untamed (69), a point with which I disagree since Fletcher's presentation can also easily

be read as confirmation that contemporary audiences doubted her complete conversion. However, Lidh's emphasis on audience reception and his claim that "Fletcher's audience was expected to understand the history of the characters portrayed" are invaluable (77).

²⁰ See Baumlín ("Petruchio" 249-52); Daniell (29); and Amy Smith (122-25).

²¹ See, for example, Helms (60-61) and Rackin ("Androgyny" 32) on the general misogyny of the period. Both Lyons (138) and Miles (115) remark specifically on the misogyny in *Epicene*.

²² See Phillippy's discussion of women's cosmetics use and the discourses surrounding it in *Painting Women* (especially 4-18).

²³ See, for example, Heffner (137); Hallahan; Newman (134-39); Woolland (128-30); and Merrens (256-58). Lanier examines masculine silences in the play.

²⁴ Others who tend to see the play as reproducing patriarchal structures include Helms (67-70) and Newman (see especially 137-40). Tiffany also argues that Jonson "uses androgynous figures to reinscribe notions of absolute gender difference and to criticize those who try to transgress or elide gender barriers" (106). On the other hand, Woolland's reading comes closer to Merrens's in claiming that Jonson subverts silence as the ideal wifely virtue (129).

²⁵ See *epicene* in *OED*, defs. B, A1. See Partridge (122-24) and Steve Brown (257-58) for further discussion of the term.

²⁶ Jonson's view of his craft actually may differ little from Shakespeare's, but, for good or for ill, Jonson's extant statements about his art, and Shakespeare's lack of such direct statements, make Jonson appear the more self-interested dramatist of the two.

As Orgel argues, Jonson's publication of his *Works* seems a pointed attempt to exert increased authority over his texts (*Authentic Shakespeare* 2). This may be, in part, a function of the differences in dramatic eras in which the two playwrights worked.

²⁷ Richard Cave notes the play's emphasis on the construction of its female characters, including the emphasis on their makeup and dress, but does not concern himself with voice (39). I would argue that this concern in the play also extends to the male characters, although to a lesser degree.

²⁸ Robert Watson enumerates the reasons why the audience is so easily tricked: 1) Truewit's name leads us to identify him with Jonson; 2) the silent woman becoming a shrew upon marriage was a commonplace; and 3) the convention of boy actors made Epicene's boyish appearance an expectation (110).

²⁹ Helms remarks that Field's role here further enforces the play's patriarchal function as Field was also to become a dramatist (70).

³⁰ Durant (163-64) and Norrington (95) document Stuart's attendance.

³¹ Both Steen ("How Subject") and Norrington present considerable evidence for Stuart's porphyria.

CHAPTER IV

“UNRULY MEMBERS”: COMPLIANCE AND TRANSGRESSION IN *THE**SHOEMAKER’S HOLIDAY* AND *THE ROARING GIRL*¹

In discussing the contributions of male amanuenses and other third parties to early modern women’s letters, James Daybell offers two vivid examples that highlight the fine line between compliance and transgression in wives’ self presentations. In the first instance, Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex, advises sister Dorothy Percy, Countess of Northumberland, to be more submissive in her letters to her husband in order to effect a reconciliation. He says, “you have written to him [her husband] lres of contrary stiles / some that heale / & others agayne that rankle the wound that you have made in his hart / wch make him think you unconstant and commanded by your passions.” Devereaux then models for her a style that he believes more appropriate in which he utilizes phrases referring to her “resolved mind” in seeking a reconciliation and offers promises to “deserve” her position as his “faithful wife” (qtd. in Daybell, “Women’s Letters” 168). Daybell claims that “[t]he fact that Essex felt the need to advise her suggests that she was far from submissive,” but, further, finds it of particular interest that Essex advises Dorothy not to be too self-effacing in order “that it might appeare to the world that it was his fault [the Earl of Northumberland’s] & not yours that you live a sunder” (168-69). As Daybell is careful to observe, no evidence of Dorothy actually following this advice exists (169), but Essex’s advice clearly portrays the practice of marital submission as a careful mediation between extremes.

The other example Daybell offers is a copy of a letter from Elizabeth Willoughby

to her husband, Sir Francis, edited by her secretary to lessen her tendency to extreme submissiveness. The secretary deletes such passages as “I pray god to dele with me further as with a most faithles & periured person both towards him and yow” and “I do here once agayne confesse to yow under my hand & seale that I have behaved my self towards yow both unadvisedly & undutifully both in worde & deede many wayes and many tymes” (169-70). Daybell understands these deletions as Elizabeth “colluding with” her secretary to develop a more appropriate and more pleasing female persona, one that is submissive but not gratingly so (170). I offer these examples here to show that, in practice, both women and men were aware of the benefits of compliance with women’s expected female behavior as well as the risks of transgression, and that, in addition, both sexes often collaborated in calculated versions of female self-representation, neither too submissive, nor too unruly. And as these two examples also reveal, some women—like Elizabeth Willoughby—willingly colluded with male constructions of their gender, while others—like Dorothy Percy, who eventually separated from her husband—may not have done so.

Based on Lynda Boose’s study of shaming devices in early modern England, we know that some women who were unsuccessful in modulating their presentations as dutiful wives were ridiculed and punished physically. Boose suggests that “obsessive energy was invested in exerting control over the unruly woman,” particularly the married woman whose speech was deemed transgressive (“Scolding Brides” 195). According to Boose, women who did not adhere to prevailing expectations for their speech were viewed not only as having unruly tongues, but as constituting “unruly members” of

society. Certainly, Dorothy Percy and Elizabeth Willoughby were never punished with scolds' bridles. But, as Daybell's anecdotes of male collaboration in female letter writing suggest, other avenues existed for women to learn to negotiate the discursive behaviors expected of them and to avoid being seen as unruly. One additional way in which women learned such behavior, and perhaps also learned to flout prescriptive expectations, was almost certainly as spectators in the theater.

As we saw in Chapter III, the cultural expectation of circumscribed speech for women, especially wives, is pervasive in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century stage drama. What I would like to explore more fully in this chapter, before moving on to some direct comparisons of male- and female-authored dramas, is not just the stereotypes of shrewish and silent women that were examined in the previous chapter, but the ways in which these representations of women's speech might offer multiple discursive options for female spectators, even in dramas in which women's discursive agency typically has not been seen by critics to play a crucial role. Read as a pair, Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, first staged in 1599, and Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *The Roaring Girl*, in 1611, offer two discursive options at either extreme for women, from Margery Eyre's compliant silence within a verbally abusive marriage to Moll Cutpurse's monstrous transgression of both marriage and verbal control. Like other male dramatists of the period, Dekker and Middleton tend to concentrate women's speech at the extremes of the silent woman and the shrew. Yet, in each of these city comedies, compliant and transgressive aspects of the main female characters coexist uncomfortably, with the resulting tensions paradoxically voicing a far

wider range of intermediate discursive behaviors for female spectators.

The expectation that early modern wives remain chaste, silent, and obedient was a commonplace among literary critics long before Boose's study.² The stakes for the wife who did not comply could be high, and, since a wife's outspokenness was intimately linked in early modern thought to a lack of chastity,³ failure to remain silent might evoke swift and sometimes severe punishment. In addition to the public shaming of the scold's bridle and cucking-stool, documented by Boose,⁴ other serious negative consequences, particularly for women of lower rank, could include separation and consequent poverty, or, more commonly, beatings—potentially deadly. However, as recent scholarship has shown, many women of higher status defied these expectations by “speaking” quite publicly—by writing poetry, pamphlets, plays, romances, and diaries, often in manuscript form; or by commissioning paintings and monuments.⁵

Given its pervasive popularity in the period, drama is a particularly rich field for investigating the extent to which literary representations uphold or violate conduct book prescriptions for female speech. Attending to the discursive patterns of women in early modern drama can reinvigorate discussion of the ways in which authors of both genders characterize women in the period. Further, although such patterns cannot be said reliably to reflect actual practices of the times, they clearly offered potential models of discursive interaction that playgoing women might choose to perform. Pamela Allen Brown has recently argued quite cogently that early modern jests, including dramatic jests, were so thoroughly familiar in popular culture that they offered “templates for action” on which women might draw to “find weapons against the everyday reality of oppression” (*Better*

a Shrew 222).⁶ I am suggesting that such templates in popular drama of the period extended beyond jest to more general discursive possibilities for women. These possibilities typically are exemplified by two opposing patterns: on one hand, compliance, achieved by Margery when she gradually refuses to verbally engage an overassertive, abusive husband; and, on the other, transgression, found here in the relative linguistic freedom of the intentionally unmarried Moll, whose behavior is simultaneously lauded and labeled monstrous. While the latter option may have been historically impractical for many women, Moll's outspokenness as a dramatic character surely occasioned both lively banter and serious reflection (if only privately among women) of what it meant to be free of marital constraints. In addition, while both of the plays discussed here ultimately uphold the social status quo, their difficulty in containing female speech within the tidy boundaries proposed by conduct literature reinforces in literary form what Valerie Wayne has described as an emergent ideology that questions the "self-perpetuating and self-justifying" male authority within marriage (*Flower* 78-80).

Tilney and Emergent Ideologies

One early modern text that offers an interesting point of comparison between expected norms of female conduct and its stage representations is a popular prose dialogue on marital conduct written by the man who later served as Master of Revels to both Elizabeth and James. Edmund Tilney's *A briefe and pleasant discourse of duties in Mariage, called the Flower of Friendshippe*, first printed in 1568 and issued in several editions over the next two decades, clearly emphasizes the importance of women's

relative silence. Relying on the form popularized by Boccaccio's *Decameron*, this short prose piece offers lectures on marriage on two successive nights, with Master Pedro focusing first on the man's duties and Lady Julia next on the woman's.⁷ Lady Julia's extreme reluctance to speak on the second night is telling of her habitual submission and her discomfort as the discursive center of attention in the mixed-sex group:

she began a little to change hir colour, and standing in doubt what she shoulde doe, much dissehabling hir selfe, but in the ende after hir pawse awhile, I rather choose quoth she, to hazard the iudgement of ignorance, by my unskilfull tale, than to be condemned of disobedience by yngentle resistance. (D3)

The highly conventional view of wifely behavior that follows is increasingly interrupted by the other nobles, particularly the gentlemen, reinforcing Tilney's emphasis on quiet deference to the husband's will in all matters.

In addition to the value placed on submission, Tilney's dialogue also follows convention in placing the burden of civility in speech chiefly upon the wife, rather than the husband. Although Master Pedro is somewhat unconventionally attentive to the necessity of the husband's restraint, instructing the husband to be "advised in speche" and "courteous, and gentle in conversation," his advice is proffered on the assumption that the wife is likely to be "froward" (C3-C3v). The wife, for her part, is enjoined to complete silence when necessary. Lady Julia instructs wives obediently to allow their husbands to chide them and quietly to tolerate such chiding even when the husband is clearly wrong—presumably to avoid the beating that Master Pedro earlier portrayed as

the inevitable outcome of verbal discord between husband and wife. Indeed, the notions of restraint and civility seem to codify the male and female roles in conduct literature of the period, with restraint suggesting the male's control of his power and civility inscribing a narrow range of female discursive practices ranging from timidity to absolute silence.

However, Tilney does offer a dissenting voice in Isabella, Lady Julia's daughter, who advocates unsuccessfully for social equality for women, and who, rather surprisingly, invites Tilney to record the dialogue in spite of the silencing of her view by the other nobles. Tilney's dialogue thus ironically disseminates the dissenting voice even as it reaffirms normative standards.⁸ No doubt, the influence of the views espoused in this popular dialogue by a man who exerted considerable power as a courtier and as the primary censor of drama, was undeniable. What I find intriguing, however, is the similarity of the "double vision" of women offered in *The Flower of Friendship*, as R. W. Maslen calls it, to the paradoxical representations of female speech within popular dramatic entertainment that, although tending somewhat anxiously to portray women at the extremes of compliance or transgression, nevertheless generates a performative space for a range of possibilities in between. Decoding what would seem to be a pervasive anxiety over female speech some four hundred years later is not an easy task, and attending to it in drama, a genre dependent upon speech, is still more complicated. Add to that the relatively little information about actual performances that has survived and the picture becomes complex indeed. Critical inquiry has frequently mimicked the over-represented extremes in dramatic representations, falling most often on silent and

shrewish women when dealing with issues of women's speech.⁹ However, my contention is that dramatic representations reveal a far more complex picture of compliance, transgression, and a range of intermediate behaviors than generally has been acknowledged. In much the same way that Wayne claims Tilney's *Flower* fails to contain a "rupture" in the fabric of dominant ideology, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and *The Roaring Girl* represent that dominant ideology while simultaneously offering alternative voices.

Margery Eyre's Figurative Bridling

Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is a play ostensibly about Simon Eyre's meteoric rise from sometime master of the "Gentle Craft" of shoemaking to eventual Lord Mayor of London, yet a little-remarked subplot concerns his wife's transformation from shrew to silent woman. Boose describes a "history of silencing" through which she says women were "shamed, tamed, and reconstituted" as suitable members of society in the period ("Scolding Brides" 213). Although not subjected literally to the scold's bridle for her outspokenness, Margery Eyre is shamed and eventually reconstituted as a silenced subject in this literary representation. Her husband is able to refashion himself, in part through his protean use of language; however, the opportunities for verbal self-fashioning available for his wife are depicted as necessarily limited by his rise. The voice of Margery Eyre seems not only a construct of Margery's tenacious personality, but also of the predictably patterned, stereotypical verbal interactions that allow her husband to prove his good husbandry.¹⁰ Constrained by notions of appropriate wifely conduct and by the tendency of the males in her household

to appropriate her speech literally, figuratively, and sexually, Margery in effect loses her voice. In contrast to Eyre's repeated assertions of his natural nobility—"Prince am I none, yet am I nobly born"—Margery's catch phrase at speech's end is eventual self-effacement: "but let that pass" (7.49-50; 1.160).¹¹

This contrast is perhaps not surprising given the changing nature of marriage at the turn of the seventeenth century from a more purely economic (and political) partnership to a romantic one, especially among the lower and middle classes. As Martin Ingram notes, "In real life, household and family were both the basis of social order and personal security and the site of tension, conflict, and contest that were, in heightened form, the essence of drama" ("Family" 93). And, as Tilney's text illustrates, domestic tensions were expected to be absorbed in virtual silence by the wife. Margery's first substantial speech in the play clearly marks her struggles as female in a household dominated by men.¹²

Introduced by her husband as the stereotypical shrew, a "wench with the mealy mouth that will never tire" (1.130-31), Margery allies herself in the first scene with Jane, the only other female character in the play with roughly equivalent social status to her own, and argues for the shoemakers' support of Jane's suit to have her newlywed husband excused from military service:

Truly, gentlemen, it were ill done for such as you to stand so stiffly
against a poor young wife, considering her case. She is new-married—but
let that pass. I pray, deal not roughly with her. Her husband is a young
man and but newly entered—but let that pass. (1.158-62)

Sexual innuendo aside, Margery's speech reveals empathy for Jane, an emphasis on kindness in marriage (which hers perhaps lacks), and also something akin to self-pity for the "poor young wife" she once was. Her characteristic catch-phrase—"but let that pass"—has gone largely unremarked by critics, while those few who have noted her habitual excuse dismiss it as merely comic.¹³ But, in addition to serving as a comic affectation, Margery's quasi-apologetic refrain is both sarcastic and ironic, marking her frustration that the substance of her speech always will be overlooked, although the fact that she has spoken will not.

Margery's verbal wincing seems a product of her husband's characteristically vociferous reactions to her suggestions. He says, "Away with your pishery-pashery, your pols and your edepols. Peace, midriff; silence, Cecily Bumtrinket. Let your head speak" (1.163-65). Eyre's response is intended to subordinate her to his authority as "head" of their marriage and their household, as well as to ridicule what he sees as an irrational, emotional response to Jane's plight. Eyre reduces her to parts, to "midriff" and "bum," as opposed to himself as "head," figuratively appropriating the organ of speech. Ronda Arab has explored the play's emphasis on the artisans as a "consolidate[d]" body in opposition to the "grotesque" female body with its threat to the male-dominated workplace (192, 201). Taking this observation a step further, the stress would seem to be on the "corporation" of the male body, a term that Firk uses later in the play in defending his loyalty to fellow guild member Hans/Lacey, as opposed to the wickedly satiric anatomy, or dismemberment, if you will, of the female body.¹⁴ Not only does Eyre wrest the right to speak from his wife, he reduces her to her component parts, evidently

choosing Margery's less flattering body parts and also those most likely to be more clearly associated with female reproduction. This denigration of the female body is extended as Eyre's verbal banter introduces a pattern of sexually objectifying Margery that allows the other males in the household to interpret her remarks as double-entendre. In this way, Margery's unwitting suggestions of male erection and receptive female vagina encourage continued sexual appropriation of her discourse by both Eyre and his shoemakers, particularly Firk. Dekker, too, is complicit in the sexual appropriation of Margery's speech, since he writes her as a character largely unaware of the jokes at her expense.¹⁵

Not surprisingly, Margery responds to these constraints on her speech in subsequent scenes with veiled aggression, for which she consistently earns negative responses. For example, her habitual catch-phrase acts as an excuse for her obvious sarcasm when she supports Firk's misguided altruism in begging Eyre to hire Hans. One of Firk's motives is clearly to appropriate the newly arrived Dutch shoemaker's "gibble-gabble" (4.51), just as he appropriates anything remotely suggestive in Margery's speech. Champion oversimplifies the situation in his analysis, reproaching Margery for nearly costing Eyre his workmen (25). Yet Margery's concern with the economic aspects of the situation seems legitimate: "We have not men enough but we must entertain every butter-box—but let that pass" (4.56-58). Hers is an intelligent analysis and perhaps not inappropriate, given the importance of the wife's role within the larger economic unit of the shoemaker's household. However, Eyre characteristically shuts down her discourse by siding with his "men" over Margery, preferring the shoemakers' camaraderie to

marital companionship and refusing to consider the practical considerations she urges (4.74).

In perhaps her most outspoken scene, Margery objects to Firk's sexual banter, only to have her husband mock her by literally appropriating her habitual language. "Let it pass, let it vanish away. Peace, am I not Simon Eyre?" he thunders (7.47-48). When Margery then objects openly to Eyre's dismissive harangue, Firk and Hodge stage a walk out, and Margery forces Eyre to choose between her and his men. Once again, Eyre chooses his "fine knaves" over his "kitchen-stuff" (7.65, 67). Clearly, her enhanced status as the wife of a successful shoemaker is the most intimate reward Margery can enjoy from this union, but only if she checks her outspokenness. Any contribution, no matter how intelligent, that she might offer regarding Eyre's business or his male friendships is inappropriate and will be let pass.

A marked change in the nature of Margery's discourse ensues when Eyre's status begins to rise and Margery attempts to conform to the standards of speech she envisions appropriate for the enhanced wealth and status she covets.¹⁶ This is evidenced by the more respectful way in which she addresses both Hodge and Firk once Eyre is named sheriff, calling them "good Firk" and "good Rodger" and tipping them (10.6, 20). Gordon Ross contends that contemporary audiences may have recognized significant echoes of Queen Elizabeth's typical diction in Margery's speech in this scene (8). Her speech is also suddenly sprinkled with references to God, who, having provided fashion as one of His "wonderful works" (10.52), has given Margery license to pursue fancier petticoats.¹⁷ In fact, as she attempts to play the lady, Margery's speech becomes so

overblown that Hodge finally cautions her, “mistress, be ruled by me, and do not speak so pulingly” (10.139-40).

Most notable, though, is the disappearance of Margery’s favorite self-effacing phrase. Lured by luxury, Margery willingly adapts her speech to meet her husband’s expectations in order to acquire the new status Eyre offers her. Her behavior is perhaps generally exemplary of women who see a potential advantage to compliance with discursive expectations for their sex. She has learned to address Eyre respectfully and sedately, and his response is to call her by the affectionate diminutives of “Madgy” and “Madge” as he showers her with gifts rather than rude names (10.149, 165). Notice, though, that he gives her “a gold chain *for Simon Eyre*” (10.149-50; italics added). These are not tokens of affection, but symbols of Eyre’s status that she will wear to prove *his* worth, not hers, on the visit to Lord Mayor Oatley. David Scott Kastan comments on Dekker’s “characteristic strategy of ‘resolving’ social contradiction” with money in this play (331). Clearly, Eyre buys Margery’s loyalty with the luxuries he offers her in order to enhance his own reputation through the cooperation of a submissive wife. Margery, who has no further speech in this scene, has now been dutifully bridled by the chain about her neck.

This superficially placid relationship continues as long as Margery’s speech conforms to that demanded of first a sheriff’s, and then a mayor’s, wife. When asked by Oatley to advise his daughter Rose, Margery, who doubtless has much to say about being ruled by a man, speaks demurely and vapidly, as expected: “I hope Mistress Rose will have the grace to take nothing that’s bad” (11.28-29). She also continues to speak

submissively to her husband, now Lord Mayor, entreating him skillfully as “Good my lord” when asking him to assist Rose in marrying Lacy/Hans (17.11), in contrast to the emotional way in which she had begged his assistance for Jane earlier. Eyre, for his part, addresses her as “my sweet Lady Madgy,” but, as in the parallel incident from Scene One, he stands by “his fine Dutch journeyman,” continuing to emphasize the value of male friendship and glossing over his wife’s need for his support (17.13, 14).

An interesting side-note to Margery’s conscious modulation of her speech to correspond to her husband’s rising status is the intriguing mention of her further interactions with Jane, whom Margery had so touchingly defended in the first scene. In the same scene in which the audience learns of Eyre’s promotion to sheriff, we are also informed in rather offhanded fashion that Jane has left the Eyre household. In her one truly autonomous act in the play, Margery has apparently rebuked Jane for behaving above her station and driven her out of the domestic community. Margery explains to Jane’s recently returned husband: “She was here a while, and because she was married grew more stately than became her. I checked her, and so forth. Away she flung, never returned, nor said bye nor bah” (10.92-95). Margery then quickly changes the subject, suggesting, perhaps, some chagrin regarding her behavior. Drawing any firm conclusions from this brief mention is difficult; however, the suggestion would seem to be that Margery may be repeating the only pattern of discourse she knows, Eyre’s authoritarian, anti-feminist rant designed to put an inferior woman in her place. Unlike Eyre, though, Margery seems conscious that she has behaved inappropriately. Her apparent censure of Jane, whether deserved or not, disrupts any potential for female

community in the household, ironically reinforcing both Eyre's earlier dismemberment of Margery in his epithets and his sense of propriety.¹⁸

The hard-earned propriety between the Eyres is disrupted one final time, though, when Margery attempts to dictate how Eyre should speak to the King. Concerned that Eyre's support of Lacy and Rose's marriage will seem inappropriate to the monarch, Margery unapologetically instructs her husband, "Good my lord, have a care what you speak to his Grace" (20.50-51). This unwelcome advice unleashes a string of derisive epithets unequaled by any other in the play, Margery being equated with spoiled sausages and with the devil "Mephistophilus," among other equally offensive things (20.54). Revealingly, Eyre thunders, "Shall Sim Eyre learn to speak of you, Lady Madgy?" (20.54-55). He disgustedly claims to know already "how to speak to a pope, to Sultan Soliman, to Tamburlaine an he were here" (20.59-60); he need not take instruction from his wife. While it is normal, indeed expected for Eyre to circumscribe Margery's speech, that Margery would presume to encroach in any way upon Eyre's speech is unforgivable; thus Eyre reverts to his former abusive strategies. In fact, after this explosion of male dominance, Margery's only remaining line in the play is a demurely conventional acquiescence to royal male authority, "God bless your Grace," in the final banquet scene (21.135).¹⁹

The Shoemaker's Holiday describes the success of the common man, but, even as it lauds the middle classes, it depicts a speech dynamic of circumscription and compliance for the common woman, a dynamic that varies depending upon her social status. As the shoemaker's wife, Margery is held in check by verbal abuse and develops

a habit of effacing her speech with an habitual “but let that pass.” As wife of the Lord Mayor, she is placated by the financial rewards of her husband’s increased status as long as she acquiesces to the new verbal status quo. But when she slips into the old habit of attempting to speak somewhat as an economic and intellectual equal, she becomes once more the shrewish shoemaker’s mistress, berated for her violation of the strict patriarchal conventions for acceptable female speech and objectified as no more palatable, sexually or otherwise, than a piece of rotten meat. It is, of course, difficult to know how realistic this picture of failed early seventeenth-century domestic discourse might have been. Ingram comments on the “sometimes glancing, sometimes direct” commentary that drama often provided on marital issues of the time (“Family” 107). Certainly, the commentary provided in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* was identifiable enough to be amusing to Dekker’s audiences, and probably true enough to have caused a wince among those outspoken, yet societally-effaced, female theatergoers who were the true butts of the jokes at Margery’s expense. To let that pass is to participate in her silencing.

Moll Cutpurse’s Defiance of the Cucking-Stool

In *The Roaring Girl*, first staged about ten years after *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, Middleton and Dekker’s titular character is anything but self-effacing in her speech. Although Margery Eyre lacks the freedom, linguistic and otherwise, that her husband possesses to recreate himself, Moll Cutpurse freely fashions a self that bends established social, class, and gender categories. While Margery is frequently the butt of the joke, Moll’s facility with various speech registers empowers her to manipulate the play’s action. Like her cross-dressing, Moll’s discourse, ranging from cant to gentleman’s

banter, enables her to stand well outside acceptable female boundaries largely because she stands outside the marriage bond. Unlike Margery, then, Moll is not constrained by the codes of conduct purveyed by Tilney and others, thus liberating her to speak as she pleases. Free to “lie o’ both sides o’ th’ bed,” as she puts it (2.2.37), Moll can choose the outrageous verbosity of a tyrant husband, the civil tones of a demure wife, or, indeed, anything in between.²⁰

Moll’s defiance of the cucking-stool in the play’s final scene clearly suggests the play’s concern with the boundaries of women’s speech, especially as it relates to marriage. This possibility is reinforced both by the title and by the Prologue’s discussion of the different types of “roaring girl.” *The Oxford English Dictionary* lists several contemporary meanings of *roaring*, including “behaving or living in a noisy, riotous manner,” for which the title of Middleton and Dekker’s play is given as an example. But another meaning familiar to the play’s audiences is “of voice, sound.”²¹ In the Prologue, for example, the daytime roarer’s pursuits include swearing and giving “braves,” suggesting that roaring can be a verbal activity, and “roaring” is, in fact, used a few lines later in this sense to mean “yelling” (ll. 19, 24). The last two lines of the Prologue would likely have elicited a roar from the audience, again reinforcing the concept of “roaring” as “voiced.” Moll, then, unlike Margery, is clearly a woman with a voice.²²

A significant difference exists within the play between the voicing of Moll and that of Mary Fitzallard. In fact, Marjorie Garber has suggested that the play “splits the figure of ‘the roaring girl’ into acceptable and less acceptable” through its pairing of “Mary-the-good and Mary the-not-so-good” (229). The constraints placed on Mary’s

speech are evident even before the introduction of Moll, whose given name is also Mary. Because of Sir Alexander Wengrave's objection to Mary as a suitable match for his son Sebastian, Mary is forced to adopt the lower-class disguise of a seamstress in order to speak to her lover. The two are forced to "cut short" their speech and to use "broken language," in Sebastian's words, to remain undetected (1.1.68). Furthermore, Sebastian does a disproportionate share of the talking. In an exchange of 65 lines, Mary contributes fewer than 15, as befits the female in courtship. Later, when Mary (dressed as a page) appears with Sebastian and Moll (disguised as a music teacher), Mary is curiously mute, contributing only three lines of more than 200 (see 4.1). While Moll's disguise is, for her, liberating, Mary's seems to confine her further. The only other scene in which Mary appears is the final one, in which, after Moll and Sebastian have duped Sir Alexander into believing they are married, Mary is revealed as Sebastian's true bride. Here, Mary speaks one couplet on the topic of "duty and love" and is praised for her conventional speech by a greatly relieved and suddenly magnanimous Sir Alexander: "That tongue can never err, the sound's so sweet" (5.2.196, 198). Clearly, Mary will be the conventional wife of the conduct books, typically silent, yet "sweet" when modestly voiced. Like her previous subordinate guises of seamstress and page, she now assumes the role of the dutifully subordinate wife.

Just as she provides a way out of a seemingly impossible situation for the young lovers, Moll illustrates an escape from the constraints placed on Mary's speech by refusing the social and economic bond of marriage. She explains in her often-quoted speech to Sebastian:

I have no humor to marry. I love to lie o'both sides o'th'bed myself: and again, o'th'other side, a wife, you know, ought to be obedient, but I fear me I am too headstrong to obey; therefore I'll ne'er go about it. . . . I have the head now of myself, and am man enough for a woman. Marriage is but a chopping and changing, where a maiden loses one head and has a worse i'th'place. (2.2.36-45)

Moll sees herself as unsuited to marriage and prefers the freedom her single state affords her. While her statement that “a wife . . . ought to be obedient” has sometimes been interpreted as her affirmation of the state of marriage in her time,²³ the line can also be read as her acknowledgement of a stipulation that she chooses not to support by refusing the institution. Her support of Sebastian's marriage to Mary indicates that she believes others have the right to choose this state freely, if they desire. In her opinion, however, a woman loses not just her maidenhead in marriage, but also her voice and her rational functions, only to be replaced by the voice and intellect of a husband, a situation similar to Margery Eyre's and one of which Moll desires no part.²⁴ Clearly, the objection to the obedience mandated by the marriage ceremony has an intensely linguistic aspect for Moll, who loquaciously celebrates a woman free to use all of her faculties.²⁵

By situating herself outside of the marriage bond and, further, by appropriating male garb when it suits her purposes, Moll is free to adopt any voice she chooses. Her perceived unnatural state, referred to as “masculine womanhood” (2.1.355), sets her apart from the cultural constraints placed upon women's speech. The assumption made by Sir Alexander and also by Laxton, who is soundly punished for his logical leap,²⁶ is

that because Moll dresses like a man, she is monstrous, and, therefore, a whore.

However, in Moll's case, this assumption is further complicated by the identification of apparel with playmaking in the Epistle, which maintains that "our plays follow the niceness of our garments" (ll. 7-8). Because plays are dependent upon both dialogue and costuming, then, according to this equation, one aspect of Moll's monstrosity is her speech, an idea that aligns perfectly with the cultural perception of outspoken women as whores. Perhaps this is the reason why none of the other characters remark directly upon Moll's extraordinary freedom of speech for a woman; her transgressive speech, already marked visually by her transgressive dress, is a given in the male characters' views of her as monstrous, unnatural, even fearful.

Moll's removal from the societal constraints of wifely behavior thus allows her easily to appropriate various forms of speech that transgress gender and class lines. Frequently, she impersonates a man or assumes styles of discourse distinctly gendered as male in the period, making her speech as hermaphroditic as her dress.²⁷ When Moll is first introduced on stage, for example, she appropriates the sword, a phallic instrument, and assumes the language of the duel in revenging herself on a fellow who "abused [her] t'other night in a tavern" (2.1.250). This verbal sparring is later repeated in Moll's more injurious attempt to disabuse Laxton of the notion that she can be purchased like a prostitute. In this scene, Moll's lecture of Laxton is reminiscent of the sermon, another male form of discourse, with its stern censure of lust, lechery, and whoredom (see 3.1.72-112).²⁸ Moll also impersonates a music teacher, a distinctly male profession in the period. Ironically, the chaste Moll's lyrics tell of a "free mistress" who is "false" because

she sexually deceives her husband, revealing Moll's song as a dream of her own longing for sexual freedom (4.1.109, 123). Finally, Moll easily participates in gentlemen's talk or passes for a gentleman at several points in the play. For instance, when Trapdoor goes to Gray's Inn Fields for an arranged meeting with Moll, he mistakes her for a gentleman based on her speech, saying in an aside, "He begins like a gentleman" (3.1.153). She also interacts quite naturally with a group of gentlemen, including two knights and a lord, at the beginning of Act 5.

In addition to crossing gender lines, Moll's speech also moves easily across class lines. When first approached by Trapdoor for a job, for example, she seamlessly assumes a higher social status and playfully mimics the discourse of mistress to servant: "So, sir, put case we should retain you to us: what parts are there in you for a gentlewoman's service?" (2.1.356-57). She is equally comfortable engaging in low-class bawdy banter, as when she entices Laxton by saying of his proposed assignation, "three horses will serve [instead of four to pull the carriage] if I play the jade myself" (2.1.282-83), suggesting her willingness to engage in sexual activity. She later tells Sebastian, "I ne'er came into that chamber yet where I took down the instrument myself," reinforcing the sexually ambiguous status of the viola between her legs as she sings (4.1.92-93).²⁹

However, the most notable example of Moll's ease with lower class discourse is the famous scene in Act 5 in which she shows off her ability with underworld slang. She rebuffs an advance from Trapdoor, sings a drinking song with Tearcat, and exposes two cutpurses—all in cant. But Moll goes a step further in featuring her linguistic skills in this scene; she also crosses class lines by translating the slang for the entertainment and

education of her upper-class companions. David M. Holmes' analysis of this scene as an extraneous attempt to display Dekker's interest in cant has been the traditional critical assessment (109). Yet when Moll's speech is viewed as an integral aspect of her character, her ability to translate cant for her gentleman audience can be seen as bridging the play's various plot lines and thematic concerns, showing her ability to operate easily at multiple levels of discourse because of her exemption from the usual constraints on female discourse. Viviana Comensoli argues that the argot of the canting scene, with "its rough and spirited cadences, balances the stylized verse in the epithalamic conclusion" (262). Worth noting is that Moll is verbally versatile enough to participate in both. Not only is her speech variously represented in low-class prose or upper-class blank verse, as needed, but she also provides a cleverly argued epilogue in rhymed couplets, her fluidity of speech matching the fluidity of her garments. This woman, unbridled by the constraints of marriage, can roar in any style that suits her.

Conversely, while riding metaphors suggest sexual activity in *The Roaring Girl* in the usual period manner, as Boose has described, bridling metaphors are applied here to men rather than to outspoken women. Moll uses a riding metaphor to taunt Laxton when she frustrates his plan for a sexual liaison, returning the money he proffers and saying to him at sword point, "There's the gold / With which you hired your hackney; here's her pace: / She racks hard" (3.1.64-66). Mrs. Openwork and Goshawk also banter about possible sexual activity using a riding metaphor, complete with "saddle," "spur[s]", and "stirrups" (3.2.186, 191). As city wives, these women perhaps are not subject to the kinds of punishments that Boose describes for women's transgressive

speech in the period (196-98, 200-02).³⁰ Instead, the men who transgress in economically irresponsible ways are subject to figurative bridling. For instance, Sir Davy Dapper has his son sent to debtors' prison for excessive speech because he will be "bridled there" (3.3.82). Sir Alexander concurs that this is the best place for Jack, who can learn there the "honeyed speech" and persuasive skills that he needs to gain the trust of his keepers, and presumably to subsequently please his father after his release (3.3.90). Gallipot, embarrassed in front of his friends for irresponsibly advancing money to Laxton, with whom his wife had clearly considered an affair, claims that he is "muzzled for biting" (4.2.302). This turnabout, using bridling metaphors to curb inappropriate male spending habits, rather than inappropriate female speech, is a further indication that Moll's freedom of speech is a crucial issue within the play. Her place as an unmarried, economically independent city woman exempts her from punishment for speaking freely and in registers inappropriate to her gender and social status.³¹

A question with which critics continue to grapple is whether Moll's stance as a woman outside of the established social institution of marriage, yet also as champion of the highly conventional union of Sebastian and Mary, reinforces or subverts social norms.³² Approaching Moll from the standpoint of her freedom of discursive styles enables us to see how Moll both maintains the status quo and moves beyond it. She reinforces expected patterns of speech for women by supporting the free choice of the traditional couple to marry, upholding the usual hierarchy within marriage, which mandates that women speak sweetly and submissively or not at all. But Moll's reference in the final scene to the cucking-stool, a punishment that was used with wives who

transgressed norms of marital speech, bolsters the idea that Moll sees herself as operating in a linguistic realm outside of the marital hierarchy. When she reveals the money that Sir Alexander previously paid her in her pose as a musician, she maintains that she is not lawless; in other words, she never intended to defraud him or to act in an economically irresponsible manner. However, the perception of Moll as reformed (or misconstrued) villain, rather than suggesting any corresponding discursive reform, multiplies her linguistic possibilities. Her comment regarding the cucking-stool suggests her awareness that her speech, clearly transgressive if she were a wife, is beyond the reach of law or custom since she is not. She is triumphantly defiant: “An you can cuck me, spare not! / Hang up my viol by me, and I care not” (5.2.262-63).

The value of Moll’s outspoken nature and of her defiance of the cucking-stool is in its vivid contrast to convention. Within the unstable gender boundaries of the play, as Stephen Orgel has observed, “Acting like a man is the most compelling way of acting like a woman” (“Subtexts” 25). Nancy Mohrlock Bunker has recently argued convincingly that the historical Moll’s masculine appearance in early-seventeenth century literary and artistic representations was greatly exaggerated. Perhaps this tendency was, at least in part, a reaction to the perceived threat of Mary Frith’s outspokenness. To masculinize her, as Dekker and Middleton and others have done, is to reduce her potential threat to the social order.³³ In this way, she is celebrated not as a new norm for females, but as an aberration. However, the resultant tension between the play’s depictions of the highly unconventional Moll and the conventional Mary Fitzallard creates an increased awareness of the differences between them, particularly

regarding the constraints on women's speech within marriage—hence Moll's otherwise inexplicable reference to the cucking-stool with which no one has threatened her. Rather than simply reinforcing the dominant ideology, *The Roaring Girl* opens a space within the world of the play where possible alterations to it can be actively imagined.³⁴ Even while upholding the norm through its support of the Wengrave-Fitzallard alliance, the play's roaring girl ultimately provides an alternative to the "common voice," as Sir Alexander calls it, that common opinion mandating continued limitations on women's freedom to speak within marriage (5.2.248). Moll's ambiguous nature—simultaneously monstrous, yet celebrated—offers a not-so-subtle reminder that such transgression was not to be tolerated even as it subtly encourages women's freer participation in spoken discourse. Furthermore, the fact that a linguistically dexterous Moll Cutpurse could command the dramatic lead only a decade after the silencing of a Margery Eyre may reflect a gradual, though grudging acceptance of women's greater participation in the social sphere.

I don't mean to suggest that Dekker and Middleton consciously manipulated their female characters to exhibit increased possibilities for women's discourse. They clearly did exploit the age's fascination with cross-dressing and hermaphrodites in their characterization of Moll and in the appearance of the historical Moll Frith on stage post-performance in order to boost ticket sales. Far more likely is that the possibilities for women's discourse suggested by these plays was a function of the anxious stance toward women's social participation in the period, and an expectation of compliance that could not seamlessly be maintained, whether in comic pursuits or historical practice. As both

Pamela Brown and Valerie Wayne suggest in their respective discussions of jesting literature and dialogues on marital conduct, these alternative interpretations and emergent ideologies then became available for female audience members to appropriate for their own uses.

Important in this regard is that both Margery and Moll are situated within their respective comedies as active spectators of popular drama. Margery's comic catchphrase is quite likely borrowed from the pretentious Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost* (staged as early as 1597, printed in 1598) and/or from Jonson's *Every Man out of his Humour* (staged at the Globe in winter 1599).³⁵ Similarly, the last two acts of *The Roaring Girl* are peppered with explicit references by the shopkeepers and their wives to popular comedies such as Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and Dekker and Webster's *Westward Ho*. Moll herself alludes specifically to Thomas Nashe's lost satire *The Isle of Dogs*,³⁶ thus proving her character's familiarity with popular theatrical entertainments and also illustrating their potential influence on her speaking styles. That the speech of both female characters reflects a familiarity with the theater is perhaps, in and of itself, unremarkable in such a self-reflexive genre. However, that these characters also would have been recognizable to early modern audiences as *spectators* of drama clearly reflects, and perhaps encourages, the discursive modeling that I am suggesting was likely to be perpetuated among women who watched and internalized the performances (albeit by male actors) of Margery and Moll (though creations of male authors).

The two male-authored plays discussed here, while not ostensibly about women's

speech, nevertheless evince strong concern with the issue. Although ultimately demonstrative of the dominant ideology that values women's relative silence, both plays nevertheless serve to complicate stereotypical interpretations of female discourse. In this way, they hint at an intermediate range of discursive options for women lying between the two extremes. Margery's satiric catch-phrase—"But let that pass"—while clearly employed for comic effect, also tellingly bespeaks the pervasive undervaluing of women's speech within the dominant culture. And Moll's outspoken defiance of the cucking-stool highlights transgressive speech as an important component of the *The Roaring Girl's* gender inversions. While not usually approached as such, I would argue that both of these plays are, at perhaps the most basic level, *about* language and its gendering, and, in particular, about the social and cultural limitations on and possibilities for women's language.

Read against one another and placed within the context of idealized norms of conduct, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and *The Roaring Girl* illustrate the complexity of the issues related to early modern women's speech. While the discursive restrictions on women and the opportunities for their transgression were certainly exaggerated in city comedy, these plays nevertheless offer supplemental models to those suggested by conduct literature and by historical devices for shaming outspoken women. In addition, their ready availability as discursive models purveyed in the most popular form of entertainment suggests their potential influence on their female audiences. Many historical women chose compliance, like the fictional Margery Eyre ultimately did. But others perhaps selectively appropriated Margery's sarcastic phrase or Moll's defiant

attitude, transgressing the cultural, social, and gender boundaries that would deny them voices. *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and *The Roaring Girl* offer representations of two extremes of women's discourse but simultaneously suggest a continuum of possibilities for the voices of early modern women, who, though gradually gaining new liberties, were still effectively constrained by strict cultural expectations that read (and overread) outspoken women as unruly.

Notes

¹ Portions of this chapter were previously presented at South Central Renaissance Conference sessions, Houston, March 2006; and San Antonio, March 2007.

² See, for example, Suzanne Hull.

³ Of the equation of scolds with whores, Boose says, “This particular collocation of female transgressions constructs women as creatures whose bodily margins and penetrable orifices provide culture with a locus for displaced anxieties about the vulnerability of the social community, the body politic” (“Scolding Brides” 195). See also Mark Breitenberg, who clarifies the “preoccupation” with female chastity among early modern men, and, in particular, the way in which “the jealous man reads and overreads” any possible indicators of cuckoldry (“Anxious Masculinity” 377-79).

⁴ See Boose for more information on the scold’s bridle and the cucking-stool (“Scolding Brides” 196-212, 185-191).

⁵ See, for example, Ezell (“Women and Writing” 77-94).

⁶ See also Adrienne Eastwood, who makes the argument that women learned feminine roles from “a growing entertainment culture that included the theater” (10).

⁷ For discussion of various editions of the text, see Valerie Wayne (“Sexual Politics” 180; *Flower* 5-6).

⁸ Similar assessments are shared by Wayne, in a section revealingly entitled “Rupture in the Garden” (*Flower* 80-93); R. W. Maslen (328); and Janet Levarie Smarr (18).

⁹ See, for example, the eloquent examination of silence in Christina Luckyj (“A

moving Rhetoricke’); and the extensive supplemental materials relative to shrews in Frances E. Dolan (*Taming*).

¹⁰ See Brian Walsh for a discussion of Eyre’s “refusal to recognize verbal constraints” (332). On the control of the wife as a crucial aspect of good husbandry, see Lorna Hutson.

¹¹ All references are to the Revels Plays edition, edited by Smallwood and Wells.

¹² While the advice of Margery’s prototype is instrumental in effecting her husband’s meteoric rise in Dekker’s prose source, Thomas Deloney’s *The Gentle Craft*, here her speech is distinctly unwelcome. For further comparison of the two characters, see Rampone.

¹³ For instance, Cyrus Hoy calls her catch-phrase an “affectation” (29); Smallwood and Wells see it as “indicative generally of incoherence and specifically of bemused embarrassment” (91n); Gordon N. Ross views it as evidence of her “humorous and philosophical” bent (8); Larry S. Champion attributes it to pretentiousness and reads her as “a comic caricature of the parvenu, nagging wife” (25); and Howard Norland also views it as comic “pretentiousness” (266).

¹⁴ Bakhtin’s comments on carnival abuse moving from praise to invective and frequently employing culinary metaphors and dismemberment seem appropriate here (216-21). However, it seems important to note two specific aspects of Dekker’s presentation of comic festive abuse: Eyre’s relative lack of praise of Margery and the distinctly gendered nature of his power to abuse her. Also, given Eyre’s focus on Margery’s lower body, see also Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger

regarding decapitation of women as a representational issue. Of particular interest is Eilberg-Schwartz's introduction (1-13); and Doniger's "'Put a Bag over Her Head': Beheading Mythological Women" (15-52), regarding the "sexual and political dehumanization" of beheading (24).

¹⁵ Norland makes a similar suggestion (266).

¹⁶ Both Ross and Champion note this change (7-9; 26).

¹⁷ David Bevington comments on both Margery's "social pretentiousness" and her Puritan "hypocrisy," which are clearly intensified at this juncture of the play (486); and Ross observes the sudden "biblical element" in Margery's talk (8).

¹⁸ The ideal that a wife should not chastise or dismiss a servant without her husband's permission is reinforced in Gouge (310-11).

¹⁹ Margery's voice is also distinctly absent in the final banquet scene of Deloney.

²⁰ All references are to the Revels Plays edition, edited by Mulholland.

²¹ See *OED*, *roaring*, defs. 2a, 3a.

²² Madhavi Menon recognizes Moll's linguistic facility, calling her "the professor of language . . . [who] insists that language can and should be meaningful," but most of her discussion is centered on Moll's transgressive clothing (59).

²³ See, for example, Jane Baston (328).

²⁴ This is a comic statement of Mariam's literal plight in Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*. See Chapter V.

²⁵ See also Moll's speech after her "assination" with Laxton (3.1.131-39).

²⁶ See Swapn Chakravorty (90). Champion correctly notes that every woman in

the play is subject to “the destructive effects of slander on a woman’s reputation” (86).

²⁷ Chakravorty makes an intriguing association between Moll’s status as man-woman and the images of “strange tongues” that her cross-dressing would have conjured (90). For an interesting discussion of the figurative nature of Moll’s hermaphroditism, see Ruth Gilbert.

²⁸ Jean Howard calls this the voice of “a reformer and a radical” (“Sex” 182-83).

²⁹ Jean Howard describes this image as masturbatory (“Crossdressing” 85). But it also has distinctly phallic connotations because both music masters and viol players were commonly male, Moll’s sitting position is gendered as masculine, and the neck of the viol rises suggestively from between her legs.

³⁰ While antiquarians document the bridle’s use in several counties in northern England beginning in the 1620s, Boose uses literary evidence to suggest its familiarity in London some 20 to 30 years earlier (“Scolding Brides”).

³¹ Howard links Moll’s subversiveness to the effects of the market economy (“Sex” 180).

³² Jane Baston, for example, describes the subversive way in which the historic Moll turned her public shaming for unproven accusations of theft into theater by arriving drunk and weeping profusely. The theatrical Moll, on the other hand, she says, defies but eventually reinscribes the prevailing order (317-18). Chakravorty says Moll is “stuck with her pretense” (93); and Garber argues that making Moll a transvestite is, essentially, a hegemonic move because she is still defined in response to the male (232). Menon contends that “Moll misrecognizes the disruptive potential of the clothing metaphor even

as she reinstalls it at the end” (64). While few critics see Moll as truly subverting social norms, several suggest ways in which her characterization exposes established social and cultural boundaries. For instance, Margo Hendricks argues that, while scenes such as Moll’s encounter with Laxton do nothing to change gender relations, her transgression of established gender codes exposes them as “power relations based upon material conditions,” creating what Hendricks calls “a potential rupture . . . that must be contained” (199). Champion suggests that Moll acts as a chorus to guide audience reaction (87). Perhaps most provocative from the standpoint of the present study is Comensoli’s argument that Moll’s characterization is evidence of a perceived change in the nature of the female audience: “the play’s favorable portrayal of a strongly independent woman points to the dramatists’ awareness of an increasingly assertive audience of city women who, as the *hic mulier* controversy attests, were demanding and gradually ‘getting more freedom’” (260).

³³ Presenting her as a reformed thief works similarly.

³⁴ Howard comments on sites of resistance and change for women in spite of the increase of patriarchal authority in the period (“Sex” 427).

³⁵ Hoy lists the first recorded performance of *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* as New Year’s Day 1600 (18). See also Anne Barton’s Introduction to *Love’s Labor’s Lost* (174); and Ben Jonson’s *Every Man out of his Humour*. Hoy also references George Chapman’s *All Fools*, first performed as early as July 1599, as well as another roughly contemporaneous collaboration by John Day and Henry Chettle, *The Blind Beggar of Bednal Green*, not printed, however, until 1659. See Frank Manley (xvii-xviii).

³⁶ The following plays are referenced: *Westward Ho* (4.2.137); *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (4.2.187); *A Knack to Know an Honest Man* (4.2.284); and *The Isle of Dogs* (5.1.120).

CHAPTER V

SLANDERING INNOCENTS ON THE BATTLEFIELD OF MARRIAGE

More than twenty years ago in her discussion of the female hero in Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*, Elaine Beilin suggested that the play presents marriage as a "battlefield" (167). Although Cary's play was probably written about 1605, shortly after her marriage to Henry Cary (later Viscount Falkland), but before they had actually lived together as husband and wife, *Mariam* was oddly prescient in anticipating the battlefield that her marriage would become. By late 1626, while her husband was serving in Dublin as Lord Deputy of Ireland and Lady Falkland and their younger children were residing in London, she caused a permanent rift in an already troubled marriage by following her religious conscience and converting to Catholicism. With the exception of a small portion of a letter from Cary to her husband—apparently copied by Henry and enclosed in a letter to Sir John Coke, Secretary of State, on 29 December 1626, complaining of his wife's disobedient and politically damaging behavior—no direct correspondence between the two survives (see 69-75). That abstract reads as follows:

You chardge me with feedeing Preests and Jesuists; for Jesuists, To my knowledge, I neuer saw the face of one in my lyef, nor intend not to doe. For Preests, it is true, I must have conversed with some, els I could not haue beene, what for noe death I will deney my self to be. For feedeing them, it is possible some one man may haue dined or supped here sum tymes, but yf there weare a bitt the more; or yf I euer appointed anything, but only sat downen to such as they prouided, I wilbe subject to your

displeasure: And since it pleased his Maiesty, to make me wheather I would or not, declare my self Catholicke, *which* is on Tuesdaye laste a Monthe, there is not one of that function euer enterd within theis house, soe carefull etc. (*Life and Letters* 272-73)

Clearly at issue, in addition to Elizabeth Cary's conversion, is her language. Falkland is outraged by his wife's insolent and equivocal responses to him regarding his complaint that she entertains Catholics at her table. In addition, she had spoken publicly against him in letters to Secretary of State Edward Conway and others to enlist their support in her attempts to have Falkland continue to fund her household expenses. Attempting to contain his wife's outspoken defiance, he appropriates her own words in battle against behavior he views as disobedient, deceitful, and dangerous. He encloses them within his words to Coke, whom he hoped would pressure Charles I to have Elizabeth returned to the custody of her mother, Lady Tanfield, and thus effect her "Recouery," as he called it, from what he believed an unconscionable religious conviction. Falkland is fearful of the impact of her conversion on his domestic life, of "nourish[ing] that serpent longer in my bosome, that deales soe treasonab[l]ye with me." But he also portrays her speech as treason against the state, warning that if she is not punished, "we shalle haue such vnhappy deuisions made in all the familyes of the kingedome as is now begun in myne, to the hazard of greate and manifest mischeefes and dangers" (271).

Cary's situation illustrates the dangers inherent for early seventeenth-century women in verbal defiance of their husbands and the lengths to which husbands might go to contain their outspoken wives. Particularly in situations involving aristocratic women

whose outspokenness or whose unconventional actions might imperil their husbands' political careers, their threatened and anxious husbands might retaliate harshly, in Henry Cary's situation by withholding the household financial support that Charles eventually ordered him to provide, ostensibly reducing his wife to poverty.¹ Additional examples include Anne Clifford's verbal battles with Richard Sackville regarding her inheritance, which clearly contributed to the deterioration of their marriage, and Arbella Stuart's with James I over her secret marriage to William Seymour, which led to her imprisonment and eventual death (see 56-57, 78-82).

In addition to these historical examples, the battlefield of marriage is frequently represented in literature, particularly in early modern drama, both on the male-dominated stage and in the so-called "closet" drama penned by women writers. In contrast to the verbal banter of comedies like *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, the presentation of such struggles in tragedy frequently echoes the dire fate of historical figures like Cary or Stuart. A close comparison of two roughly contemporaneous plays with roughly parallel plots illustrates clear differences between male and female writers' perspectives on the social relevance of women's marital speech issues. Both Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* depict aristocratic women who defy early modern expectations for marriage and for marital behavior. Webster's widowed Duchess marries secretly and below her status, without the consent of her brothers—who see it as their prerogative to choose her husband and to control the family bloodline—and is punished for her defiance with death. Cary's Mariam, on the other hand, is bitterly disappointed to find that she is not, in fact, widowed, as had been

reported previously, and, rather than feigning wifely affection for Herod, defies him by refusing to rejoice in his presence and warm his bed upon his return. She, too, pays for her defiance with death. Although the Duchess successfully creates a positive marital environment, she loses it due to her brothers' tyranny. Mariam tries to escape an intolerable marital tyranny with similar, though still more sinister, implications. In spite of the forward-thinking nature of Webster's portrayal of companionate marriage, *The Duchess of Malfi* argues the impossibility of such a view when familial (particularly aristocratic) expectations intervene. However, *Mariam* argues something far more profound: that married women can never be free or innocent in an unstable male-dominated society. As the despairing Butler says just prior to hanging himself because of his role in impugning Mariam's virtue, "Heav'n gave me not my tongue / To slander innocents" (4.5.267-68). But in Cary's world, even more so than in Webster's, women are destined to be slandered and slaughtered on the marital battlefield.

The Duchess of Malfi and The Tragedy of Mariam

Although not published until 1623, *The Duchess of Malfi* was probably written in 1612 and first performed in 1613 to 1614 (Engle 1749). Like much of Webster's work, *Malfi* is often faulted for its apparently inferior plot, with a fifth act that seems disconnected from the rest of the play's action, and for its unclear moral interpretations, particularly of Bosola and the Duchess (Luckyj, "Great Women" 267; Rose 157). Dymphna Callaghan divides previous approaches to the play into two broad categories based on critical reactions to its female protagonist: traditional and gender-conscious. Traditional critical approaches have tended to see Webster's female-centered tragic plot

as “oddly decentered,” even as indicating the “demise of the genre itself,” or as being more properly a critique of the Jacobean political order than the story of an individual’s tragedy. But as Callaghan quite rightly points out, the latter approach, in particular, fails to account for Webster’s choice of a female protagonist. Her recent critical volume thus focuses on gender-conscious criticism that acknowledges Webster’s participation in the ongoing cultural debate over women’s social and political status (*Duchess* 1-3).

However, even among those who approach the play in gender-conscious fashion, readings of the Duchess’s representation relative to the woman controversy differ markedly.² Lisa Jardine cautions against reading the Duchess as an emblem of emancipated womanhood in the period, arguing not only that the Duchess is mistaken about the scope of her political power as a dowried woman according to inheritance practices of the time, but that she is “a transposition of a complex of attitudes towards women into a ‘travesty’ (literally, a man in woman’s clothes) of seventeenth-century womanhood” (*Duchess* 216). Others who view the Duchess’s story as perpetuating early modern stereotypes about the necessity of women’s containment often buttress those arguments with analysis of the Duchess’s political position. For instance, although Mary Beth Rose views the Duchess as representing emergent cultural views of women’s independence in her marriage to Antonio, she claims that Webster ultimately locates her instead within the residual, and particularly aristocratic, “dualizing mentality that either idealizes or degrades women” (165).³ Theodora Jankowski focuses on the negative effects of the sexualized female body on the body politic in the play, concluding that “the duchess’s subversive attempts at rulership [act] as a corrective to an existing system

that is imaged as morally bankrupt” (“Defining/Confining” 245). Christy Desmet also argues that Webster’s portrayal of the Duchess is a result of the threat female sexuality posed to the body politic in the Jacobean period: “her tragedy has less to do with her moral nature than with the logical dilemma surrounding female rule” (“Neither Maid” 53). Echoing Beilin’s words about *Mariam*, Desmet figures the Duchess, not marriage itself, as the “battlefield” for the men in her life (54). Similarly, Carla Spivack, who sees *Malfi* as participating in a post-Elizabethan backlash against female rule, attempts to illustrate that “the play uses the dismantling of Elizabethan iconography to *remove* women from the public sphere” (120).

Other scholars have tended to compare the discourse of companionate marriage promoted in the play to its suggestions of women’s limited political power, often finding positive aspects of women’s representation. Catherine Belsey sees the Duchess’s behavior as scandalous, both in her own time and in our own, but nevertheless emphasizes the positive domestic realm that she creates with Antonio. She argues that the play is “a perfect fable of emergent liberalism,” a trend based on romantic love that allowed women to find their place as subjects within the home, though at the cost of their standing in the political realm (198, 192-94). Emily Bartels sees *The Duchess of Malfi* as participating in an early seventeenth-century challenging of women’s containment in marriage, an exploration of “female self-fashioning and the kind of voice and agency it carries” (423, 421). Likewise, the play’s emphasis on the female body and on reproductive sexuality is viewed as particularly positive by Judith Haber, who lauds Webster’s attempt “to open up a space of sexual difference, a space in which woman can

exist—not as a container, a box, a body for man, but for herself” (“My Body Bestow” 149).

Reactions to Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam* have been similarly complex and still more closely focused on gender issues. The earliest known original play by an Englishwoman, *Mariam* was probably written between 1602 and 1605, after the publication of her source—Thomas Lodge’s English translation of Josephus’s *Antiquities of the Jews*—but before Cary’s husband returned from military service in Holland. The play circulated in manuscript before its publication in 1613, which may have been the result of John Davies’s encouragement of Cary in his dedicatory letter to *The Muse’s Sacrifice* the previous year. However, because of Cary’s involvement in the Sidney circle and her apparently active involvement as patron to other writers, it has been speculated that her play was well enough known in manuscript form to have served as a source for *Othello*, the anonymous *Second Maiden’s Tragedy*, and perhaps several other plays.⁴

Criticism of *Mariam*, as Karen Raber explains, has followed a general trend from its biographical revelations to its “broader cultural manifestations of gender ideologies,” with the most recent trend being part of a broader attempt to establish the theatricality of “closet” dramas (*Ashgate Critical Essays* xiv, xxiv). Much of the earliest attention to *The Tragedy of Mariam* explored parallels between the play and Cary’s life, described in *The Lady Falkland: Her Life*, most likely written about 1645 by her daughter Lucy, a sister at Our Lady of Consolation in Cambray (xiv; Weller and Ferguson 48). For example, although acknowledging the likely bias of the biography, Beilin suggests that its picture

of Cary's early years seems unbiased and accurate in comparison to other sources and emphasizes the close parallels between Mariam and Cary (157-58). More recently, in an attempt to examine Cary's relationship to early feminist thought, Lynette McGrath has examined what she calls a "'nomadic' female subjectivity" that enables evasion of cultural binaries and that she associates with both Mariam and Cary (171). Other criticism takes a more "mutually revelatory" approach to the play and the biography (Raber, *Ashgate Critical Essays* xiv). For instance, Meredith Skura has used the negative construction of the maternal in *Mariam* to reread the *Life* and to suggest that Cary sought a mother in her Catholicism.

Another early approach to the play took the form of genre study. Cary's is one of roughly a dozen known plays in English apparently intended for reading or private performance rather than the stage, and generally modeled on the popular early tragedies of Robert Garnier. The group includes translations from classical Greek and Latin, or from French, like Mary Sidney's *Antonie*, as well as original dramas by Cary, Samuel Daniel, Fulke Greville, and William Alexander.⁵ English closet drama in this French Senecan tradition is characterized by a highly formal structure, with use of a chorus to provide commentary on the action, and generally centers on political tragedy or, occasionally, its domestic implications. Frequently criticized as inferior for its lack of action, poorly developed characters, "stodgy verse lines," didacticism, and lack of closure, it has recently drawn critical interest because of its suitability for fostering debate and allowing women's participation in an alternative theatrical form (Raber, *Dramatic Difference* 17-18). The most thorough examination of the closet drama,

including Cary's *Mariam*, is Karen Raber's. Defining the genre more broadly to include any play not written specifically for performance (thus including the later works of Margaret Cavendish, for example), Raber argues that closet drama operates on a "frontier" between institutional theater and broader authorial practices of dramatic representation. She also claims that it was well-suited to women, in particular, allowing them both a "space for analysis of dysfunction within marriages, families and governments" and "an authoritative, public presence" (14).⁶ Although such texts were frequently circulated in manuscript as well as print, some have argued that the closet drama was not as dependent on closeted reading as its name might imply. Both Rosemary Kegl and Alison Findlay have urged that closet drama be thought of as part of a range of household and court dramatic activities that blur the boundaries between public and private, and between real and fictional (136-37; "Theatres" 206-07).

Although *The Tragedy of Mariam* is often understood as a critique of early Jacobean political discourse⁷ and, at times, as a commentary on the intersections of race and gender in the period,⁸ the critical debate regarding the play as reinforcing or critiquing early modern marital discourses is more pertinent to the present discussion. Margaret Ferguson's fascinating examination of Cary's use of equivocation to force the reader to pass judgment on *Mariam* suggests that *Mariam* offers no clear position on marital ideology, although Ferguson argues persuasively that Cary's approach disguises a critique of the existing patriarchal system (see "Allegories of Subjection"). Travitsky and Diane Purkiss have maintained forcefully that the play reproduces existing patriarchal constructs ("Blood"; "*Feme Covert*").⁹ Both Raber and Katherine Acheson

conclude that the play exposes the impossibility of functioning as female within the existing ideological system, Raber focusing on the futility of resisting domestic tyranny and Acheson on the female characters who “refuse to perform” in a system that defines them in a destructive manner (*Dramatic Differences* 164-72; ““Outrage your face”” par. 1). Other critics see more positive implications for Cary’s play. For instance, Straznicky applauds Cary’s alteration of the Christian stoic ethic to focus on female, rather than male, heroism, and Alexandra Bennett values the “diverse possibilities for female agency” implied by the incongruity between being and seeming in the play (“Female Performativity” 294).

Several critics who see the play as to some degree a challenge to prevailing expectations for women in marriage focus on the link to women’s speech. Belsey claims that the play “sharply problematizes” the speech issue and concludes that it highlights the difficulty of “being both a liberal-humanist subject and a wife” in a society in which women were expected to give away both their thoughts and speech (165, 174). Gwynne Kennedy detects a positive benefit in the play’s construction of discursive positions for women that allow them “to consent *and* dissent,” an aspect of speech which she identifies as specifically male in that it is untied to “marital status or assumptions about sexual fidelity” (126). In somewhat similar fashion, Margu rite Corporaal views *Mariam* as a woman “who transgress[es] the boundaries of feminine silence by engaging rhetoric” (““Thy Speech”” par. 7). Reina Green examines the effects of gender on the speaker-listener dynamic in both *Mariam* and *The Duchess of Malfi* to expose the instability of the married woman’s position. (460-62). Similarly, Kathleen Kalpin

examines both plays to illustrate how scaffold speeches are validated by the audiences' desire for them and provide an opportunity for female speakers to exercise "a hint of their own agency" (165).

A number of critics also comment on the agency Cary's play demonstrates for her as a writer. Beilin, Travitsky, and Maureen Quilligan all see the precariousness of Mariam's position as a reflection of the difficult social position of the female author (168; "*Feme Covert*" 186; 230). Raber views Cary's invocation of the theatricality of both stagecraft and statecraft at the moment of Mariam's offstage death as an illustration of the aristocratic woman writer's paradoxical position (*Dramatic Difference* 173-74). On the other hand, Irene Burgess identifies Salome, rather than Mariam, as a figure for the woman writer, who is "acting outside the bounds, doing that which is not accepted or expected by patriarchal culture" (23). Kennedy, too, describes Cary as distinct from Mariam in her production of public language and characterizes her as both "anxious" and "aware" of the results of circulating her text (123-24). Still others see the legitimization of the female author as springing not from a particular character's portrayal, but from other qualities inherent in the text. Corporaal defines it as a function of the text's identification of the female voice with chastity and purity in contrast to male unfaithfulness, while McGrath discerns a "writerly breakaway from confining boundaries and unified positions" ("To be" 195; 175).

Willing a Positive Discourse

As is evident from the numerous critical studies mentioned above, both the Duchess and Mariam exert a certain amount of power and freedom in their respective

worlds and in their respective marriages, even if that freedom is circumscribed and their speech eventually silenced. The Duchess's freedom in marrying Antonio without her brothers' knowledge and against their wishes is described as an exercise of her "will" (1.1.377). Mariam's freedom is a similar exercise of will, a function of knowing when to curb her tendency toward "unbridled" or "public" speech in order to curry favor with the controlling and unpredictable Herod (3.3.183, 1.1.1).¹⁰ For the Duchess, freedom exists for a number of years, long enough for her to marry Antonio and bear him three children before she is found out and hunted down by her evil brothers. For Mariam, freedom lasts less than a day, from the time she receives the mistaken report that Herod has died until she herself dies at Herod's command. However, for both women, this exercise of will, closely tied as it is to their freedom of speech, opens a theatrical space in which they have considerable discursive agency. For the Duchess, that space occurs within a mutually loving marriage; conversely, for Mariam, it lies in freedom from marital constraints.

In spite of the ongoing critical argument over whether the Duchess challenges or reinforces prevailing stereotypes of women, the Duchess's remarkable discursive agency within marriage has received little attention. Bartels and Corporaal, in particular, make note of this aspect of her characterization, Bartels noticing its link to her independence as a widow and to her "visible compliance" with her brothers' demands, Corporaal remarking that she "appropriates discursive agency in contexts where society expects a woman to be silent" (420-22; "'Moor'" 103). From the moment in which the Duchess is introduced in Webster's play, her speech is emphasized and her inversion of the

expected postures of feminine speech is highlighted. In introducing his friend Delio to the court at Malfi, Antonio describes its poisonous and degraded atmosphere in comparison with the noble French court from which he has just returned. While Ferdinand “speaks with others’ tongues” and the Cardinal proffers “oracles” from the “devil,” the Duchess, in contrast, possesses a discourse “full of rapture” (1.1.173, 186, 190). Based on his obvious affection for the Duchess, in whose household he serves as steward, there is a clear bias in Antonio’s account. Findlay points out the powerful, sexually provocative nature of the voice that Antonio hears in her (*Feminist Perspective* 100-01). Yet since Antonio proves to be such an accurate observer of the others at court, this first impression seems one the audience is meant to trust.

The manner of the Duchess’s speech, however, seems unremarkable—if occasionally forceful, as when she tells Ferdinand, “Will you hear me? / I’ll never marry” (1.1.303-304)—until she is alone with Antonio. At this point, her speech is suddenly enriched with wordplay and metaphor, in which Antonio joins playfully, but respectfully. She asks Antonio to take pen in hand and inscribe “somewhat” for her, an ordinary enough task for a steward to complete for his mistress, but the import of the occasion is heightened when she asks him to write her “will” (1.1.364, 377). The multiple meanings of *will* become clear throughout the passage, as she controls the course of events in their conversation. First, she ask for Antonio’s counsel on her will, the legal disposition of her property, to which Antonio responds that she should give her “all,” her “excellent self” to a husband (1.1.389). She next discerns whether Antonio’s understanding of marriage matches her own will, her healthy, physical desire for a

companionate union, when she questions whether she should give herself “In a winding-sheet” (1.1.390). His response—“In a couple”—indicates a mutuality, rather than a subsuming of the woman in marriage, that prompts her to ask him quite directly for his opinion of marriage. The picture he subsequently paints of a happy marriage in which the father delights in a young child “rid[ing] a-cockhorse / Upon a painted stick, or . . . chatter[ing] / Like a taught starling” is so pleasing to her that she offers him her ring, exercising her will, her prerogative, to marry him (1.1.402-04). Findlay has spoken of the symbolic importance of the ring in the marriage scene as representative of the play’s depiction of “the struggle to open or close the ring of the female aristocratic body” (*Feminist Perspective* 101). I would suggest that it is also representative of the opened mouth, given the fluent marital discourse that it precipitates here, including her playful stopping of Antonio’s mouth with what she calls his “*quietus est*” (1.1.465). Antonio’s phallic pen is firmly controlled by the Duchess’s own hand, as it were, as he not only writes down her will but speaks it in the words that she elicits from him.

Another significant aspect of the Duchess’s speech in this scene is the metaphor of silent submission she evokes when she refers to the “the figure cut in alabaster / [that] Kneels at my husband’s tomb” (1.1.455-56).¹¹ This figure stands in marked contrast to the willing “flesh and blood” standing beside Antonio and willing him to rise from his knees, where he protests his “unworthiness” to marry her (1.1.454, 431). Her gender inversion in playing the wooer, a role which she ascribes to her status, but which seems also to be a function of her commanding personality, is clearly alluded to when Antonio remarks, “These words should be mine, / And all the parts you have spoke” (1.1.473-74).

But her inversion also precipitates his class inversion, raising him from the level of steward to husband (albeit secret husband) of a Duchess.¹² The kneeling of one party to another here indicates not only submission, but the inhibition of healthy discourse. Its opposite, exhibited in the two kneeling jointly to take their vows and then standing beside one another in a mutually enjoyable, sexually productive marriage, encourages mutual discourse. Their stichomythic speech at the end of the scene as they speak their *de praesenti* vows illustrates how closely entwined the two have become. What Antonio terms her “conceit”—referring both to her idea that they should marry and to the elaborate metaphor created through their conjoined speech—is their union, their “sacred Gordian” knot (1.1.481).¹³ In a subtly sexual, profoundly intimate comment on their mutual discourse, the Duchess says that Antonio now speaks *in* her, not *for* her: “You speak in me this, for we now are one” (1.1.496, 498)

The other evidence of the positive discursive space which the Duchess creates within marriage is the bedroom scene in act three, in which she banters playfully in her private domestic world with Antonio and Cariola before being interrupted rudely by Ferdinand. When Antonio begs to lie with her, the Duchess accuses him good-naturedly of being “a Lord of Misrule” and mocking her superiority (3.2.7). Cariola joins comfortably in their repartee, suggesting that this playful, affectionate, witty discourse is a common occurrence. To jokingly dissuade Antonio from staying, she accuses her mistress of being “the sprawling’st bedfellow” and warns, “She’ll much disquiet you” (3.2.13, 12)—a not-so-subtle reference to the Duchess’s sexual appetite, but also perhaps a teasing perversion of the “*quietus est*” that she earlier overheard the Duchess “sign” for

Antonio with their first kiss. The Duchess and Antonio are so clearly content in their marriage that Antonio affectionately urges Cariola to marry as well. As the two steal away in an effort to play a joke upon the Duchess, however, the Duchess continues in the same playful vein to chide Antonio for not keeping his distance while her brothers are at court. Haber's brilliant analysis of this scene points out its orgasmic nature, with the Duchess's revision of the uninvited phallic penetration of rape into a new "syntax of gender and power" based upon mutual penetration ("My Body Bestow" 138-40).

Thinking she is still speaking to Antonio, the Duchess says, "I entered you into my heart / Before you would vouchsafe to call for the keys" (3.2.62-63). Haber identifies the Duchess's teasing conversion of her brothers into Antonio's gossips with sexual foreplay, since it equates Ferdinand and the Cardinal with those female friends usually invited to a lying in, a women-on-top activity typically associated by men with meaningless women's chatter (142-44). At that precise moment, Ferdinand enters unseen and, although the Duchess does not yet know it, the safe space of mutuality and open discourse that she has constructed so carefully within her marriage is shattered.

Mariam's experience provides a clear contrast to that of the Duchess in that marriage for Mariam is a prison rather than a mutually enjoyable, healthily productive union. In Mariam's society, and in the early Jacobean English society that Cary's story mirrors, a woman was expected to give herself, body and mind, to her husband. The Chorus at the end of act three echoes the advice so familiar in conduct book literature of the early modern period, advising restraint both in a wife's behavior and interactions with others.¹⁴ Echoing the motto "be and seem" that Cary was later to have inscribed in

her eldest daughter's wedding ring, the chorus argues that wives must not only seem but be virtuous.¹⁵ But perhaps most troubling for the habitually outspoken Mariam is the Chorus's insistence that wives' thoughts, as well as their bodies, become the property of their husbands:

When to their husbands they themselves do bind,
Do they not wholly give themselves away?
Or give they but their body, not their mind,
Reserving that, though best, for others' prey?
No sure, their thoughts no more can be their own,
And therefore should to none but one be known.
Then she usurps upon another's right,
That seeks to be by public language grac'd:
And though her thoughts reflect with purest light,
Her mind if not peculiar is not chaste.
For in a wife it is no worse to find,
A common body than a common mind. (3.3.233-44)

Since a wife's thoughts can be accessible to her husband only through her speech, a wife who is incapable of dissembling—or unwilling to do so, as Mariam later is—runs a particular risk. Rather than the Gordian knot exhibited in the speech of the Duchess and Antonio, the prevailing wisdom in *Mariam* offers a particularly limiting uniformity in which the thought and speech of the husband and wife are identical; otherwise, the wife is viewed as unchaste. Belsey describes the problem as a complete surrender of

subjectivity, of the “wife’s right to speak,” while Findlay says that it “dramatizes the wife’s imprisonment in the family” (171; *Feminist Perspective* 152). Ultimately, as Raber claims, no “acceptable” position exists for a wife because of the “illogical ideology” of coverture (*Dramatic Difference* 156-57).

Marriage is still more imprisoning for Mariam than these cultural mandates suggest because of Herod’s jealous and tyrannical behavior as her king and husband. Having divorced Doris in order to satisfy his desire for Mariam, and, in addition, having killed Mariam’s grandfather (Hircanus) and brother (Aristobolus) to secure his rule of Judea, Herod has twice given commands to have Mariam executed if he should die in order to prevent another man from enjoying her sexually. But when first Josephus and then Sohemus reveal Herod’s orders, Herod suspects them of infidelity with Mariam and has them executed. It is not surprising that Mariam chafes at such a restrictive and suspicious marital environment. Her ambivalence in the play’s oft-quoted opening lines is a function of her combined “grief” over Herod’s death and her “joy” at her resulting freedom (1.1.10). She recognizes keenly that she may have contributed to her husband’s death in her previous outspoken censure of Caesar, but she nevertheless rejoices in the freedom that this change in marital status creates in contrast to the narrow confinement she has previously suffered. Her repetition as she chides herself for her earlier lack of restraint allows the audience a clear window into the oppression she has experienced:

Oft have I wish’d that I from him were free;

Oft have I wish’d that he might lose his breath,

Oft have I wish’d his carcass dead to see. (1.1.16-18)

She continues by blaming Herod's restrictiveness for her desire to experience freedom, not in order to love another, as the Chorus is so quick to imply later, but to escape a tyrant who has killed her close relatives to advance his personal ambition and who willingly would kill her, too, to preserve his female property inviolate.

And it is to that inviolate, virginal state that Mariam would return. The image that she chooses is suggestive: "had I rather much a milkmaid be, / Than be the monarch of Judea's queen" (1.1.57-58). Weller and Ferguson note the echoes of this image in *Antony and Cleopatra* and in Queen Elizabeth's 1576 speech to Parliament (154n58). The latter is especially suggestive because it occurs in the context of one of Elizabeth's many attempts to defend her reluctance to marry, resonating intriguingly with Mariam's own newfound freedom. The text of the speech as recorded in a version from the miscellany of Henry Stanford, a member of the household of Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, reads as follows: "I must confess my own mislike so much to strive against the matter as, if I were a milkmaid with a pail on mine arm, whereby my private person might be little set by, I would not forsake that single state to match myself with the greatest monarch" (170).¹⁶ Both images suggest a pure, innocent state, free from the encumbrances of marriage and status, both of which forced women to set aside their private selves. Mariam's longing for her "virgin freedom," a time when, "unrestrain'd" and unaware of (or naively overlooking) Herod's tyrannical nature, she first fell in love, reinforces the playful, chaste milkmaid image (1.1.72). Even as she acknowledges her love for Herod, Mariam desires a return to her pre-marital, unconstrained existence. McGrath speaks extensively of Mariam's desire to walk "'on the ridge,'" as the Chorus

later calls it (3.3.222), saying that “Mariam’s ‘ranging’ is not simply a contrary or rebellious response to oppression , . . . [but also] a means of establishing herself as capable of agency” (194). Unlike the comparative freedom of the lowly milkmaid or the mutual affection and consideration of the Duchess’s marriage, Mariam has instead been trapped in a union that stifles female agency.

However, the rumor of Herod’s death creates a dramatic space, a space of action and agency, in which Mariam and the other characters can achieve their desires: Mariam can be free of a tyrannical spouse; the servant Graphina can marry Pheroras, Herod’s brother; and Salome can “divorce” Constabarus and marry the Arab Silleus. This sense of agency is particularly pronounced for the female characters, creating implicit comparisons between Mariam, Salome, and Graphina, in particular. Both Beilin and Ferguson have suggested the necessity of considering the three women together, Beilin claiming that Salome represents Mariam’s “rebellious tendencies” and Graphina her “purity,” while Ferguson argues compellingly that Salome’s negative views of Graphina and Mariam force the readers to question these apparently virtuous characters (168; “Allegories” 289, 298).

Salome’s negative characterization, of course, renders her judgment of the other women somewhat suspect. Characterized by Lodge as “Swetnam’s ‘lewd, idle, forward, and unconstant woman’” and by Straznicky as the “female grotesque” of Mariam’s passions, Salome is clearly a foil to Mariam’s apparent purity (67; 127).¹⁷ Like Mariam, Salome longs for release from her marriage, not because of any wrongdoing on Constabarus’s part, but because she desires to replace him with Silleus—just as

Constabarus previously replaced her former husband, Josephus, executed by Herod at Salome's urging. Attempting now to invent some stratagem to be free of a husband to whom she is no longer attracted, she argues that women should be as free as men are to divorce, claiming "I'll be the custom-breaker: and begin / To show my sex the way to freedom's door" (1.4.303, 309-10). Clarke explains that the English Church in the early modern period continued to follow a Catholic stance on divorce, allowing husbands to seek divorce only on grounds of adultery, whereas the Judaic law on which Salome's reasoning depends allowed a husband to divorce his wife "if she failed to find favor with him." Because of its basis in Judaic law, Clarke sees Salome's argument for divorce as "an articulation less of a doctrine of equality than of the dangers attendant on the dissolution of the marital bond where this is based upon ambition and sexual desire, rather than on morality and law" (253-54). Salome's version of divorce is not freedom from marriage such as Mariam seeks, but rather a license for serial marriage. She seeks divorce not to change custom for other women's benefit, as her speech in this scene implies, but to continue her own custom of replacing husbands at will.

Another aspect of Salome's characterization that can be compared profitably with Mariam's is her speech. Callaghan remarks on Salome's unusual "verbal license" as a female villain ("Re-Reading" 184). But Mariam, too, exercises considerable verbal license during the period in which she believes herself widowed, especially in her rather vicious upbraiding of Salome for her base birth and lack of marital constancy. While both women are clearly capable of wielding their tongues as weapons, Cary weights their motives differently. Just as Salome accuses Alexandra of speaking more freely than

she would if Herod were still alive—"You durst not thus have given your tongue the rein / If noble Herod still remained in life" (1.3.219-20)—Mariam's speech, too, is now more free. As Kennedy suggests, this encounter with Salome allows Mariam to freely express herself in relation to her rank and virtue and, by extension, to critique Herod in a way that she had not been able to do previously, before his presumed death (119). The emphasis on Salome's vow-breaking, however, is double-edged because it helps to expose the unconventional nature of Mariam's own marriage as the result of Herod's divorce of Doris. This is an issue that has not troubled Mariam previously because she sees herself as superior in status to other women, and perhaps because she sees the marriage as initiated by Herod, but it is an issue which her discussion with Alexandra and her outburst toward Salome bring into sharp relief for the reader. Mariam's and Salome's similarities thus reveal themselves clearly because of their outspoken natures; yet their purposes in speaking out differ. In spite of her own culpability in the repetition of marital structures that victimize women, a guilt she later faces in her confrontation with Doris, Mariam speaks out as the victim of a tyrannous husband. Salome, on the other hand, gives voice to the consummate victimizer, willingly replicating a destructive marital pattern.

As the other female character seeking an unconventional marriage, Graphina provides an additional layer of contrast to the marital situations of Mariam and Salome. Often viewed as reproducing the patriarchal status quo in her attitude toward marriage,¹⁸ Graphina has recently been viewed as more substantive and complex than heretofore and also has been compared to Cary herself. For instance, Ilona Bell sees Graphina's secret

marriage to Pheroras as daring rather than submissive and likens the course of the education she is apparently devising to improve herself for a higher-status husband to Cary's own education (22-23). In addition, Ferguson's most recent examination of the play takes a reading of Graphina as central to the question of female writing, arguing that her lengthy response to Pheroras in act two, scene one, questions the silence of the normative wife and suggests the potential eroticism of silence ("Allegories" 284, 287). Although Graphina's speech seems to be that of the proper aristocratic woman, Ferguson says, instead "her apparently modest and virtuous words offer numerous opportunities for suggesting that her words are not a transparent window to her mind" (288). Graphina portrays herself as an unaccomplished speaker, when the adeptness of her speech suggests otherwise. She is quick to reassure Pheroras that silence is not, in fact, "a sign of discontent," as he fears, but a result of her fear that she should "say too little," given the rich favor he is bestowing upon her (2.1.42, 66, 50). She rather prettily excuses her silence, saying she is keenly aware of her lack of polish in comparison to the eldest daughter of Herod, whom Pheroras has spurned for her sake:

. . . need not all these favours study crave,

To be requited by a simple maid?

And study still, you know, must silence have.

Then be my cause for silence justly weighed. (2.1.65-68)

Her witty repetition of *silence* three times within a 28-line speech suggests not blind obedience to Pheroras, but playful affection. In fact, the manner in which she begs his indulgence—"since you will my imperfections bear, / In spite of doubt I will my silence

break” (2.1.51-52)—inscribes a safe arena for her speech, reminding him not only that her speech may contain “imperfections,” but also subtly creating a climate in which such imperfections will be overlooked willingly in future.

The heightened opportunities for female agency during the small window of time during which Herod is believed dead are radically altered, however, once he returns. Salome rapidly recalculates her position and develops a new scheme that will guarantee Herod’s execution of Constabarus, just as he previously executed Josephus at her urging. The once hopeful marriage of Graphina to Pheroras, completed only moments before Herod’s return is announced, is now tainted by Pheroras’s complicity in Salome’s plotting. And Mariam is left, reeling, trying to determine how to proceed. Her refusal to be reconciled, like her outspokenness earlier, must be read in contrast to the courses taken by the other female characters and in contrast to the normative voice of the Chorus. In contrast to Salome’s wily verbal manipulation of Herod and to Graphina’s utter silence, Mariam retreats to an inner space to preserve herself. Refusing to return to Herod’s bed and to the “prison” of her marriage, she takes “shelter” in her innocence (3.3.151, 171). Instead of her previous limited compassion for Herod’s death, she describes her mind now as a stage peopled with hate and scorn, which she can no longer disguise:

. . . now that curtain’s drawn off from my thought,

Hate doth appear with visage grim:

And paints the face of Herod in my heart,

In horrid colors with detested look:

Then fear would come, but scorn doth play her part,
 And saith that scorn with fear can never brook. (3.3.157-62)

In spite of the “fear” that might be occasioned by Herod’s response to the “unbridled speech” that Sohemus terms her “worst disgrace,” Mariam resolves no longer to pretend affection for Herod that she does not feel (3.3.183).¹⁹ Elisa Oh poses Mariam’s dilemma in terms of Cary’s motto—be and seem—suggesting that it might be understood to mean either “pragmatic female dissimulation” or “dangerous feminine transparency” (198). The former, which we have seen associated with Graphina, and which Mariam herself apparently has employed in the past, is clearly rejected here by Mariam. The freedom that she imagined in her widowhood and the freedom of discourse that she exercised so briefly as a result is now unutterably altered.

Engaged in a Battle of Words

For both the Duchess and Mariam, then, the freely discursive space that one woman finds within marriage and the other in release from it is impossible to sustain and leads to their eventual deaths. However, while the Duchess relegates herself to the part she is expected to play in her demise at the hands of her tyrannical brothers, Mariam selects her own role, achieving a greater measure of discursive agency, even in death. In the case of the Duchess, the positive, loving, freely productive space that she had once shared with Antonio becomes instead her tomb. What had once been for her a comforting, nurturing enclosure is transformed into what Findlay describes (in her focus on the Duchess’s female body) as “fossilized” (*Feminist Perspective* 100). Haber, too, refers to the deconstruction of the positive space the Duchess has constructed (“My

Body Bestow’” 147). Spivack provocatively suggests that the problem results from her brothers’ penetration of the Duchess’s secret interior space (140), evoking a figurative rape in keeping with the sexual tension many critics have observed in Ferdinand’s possessiveness toward his sister.²⁰

The linked imagery of tongues and graves in the bedroom scene after Ferdinand appears is significant. Realizing that Antonio has not replied to her, the Duchess queries, “Have you lost / Your tongue?,” only to have Ferdinand unexpectedly assume Antonio’s place and invite the Duchess to die on the tip of his poniard, a sharp antithesis to the affectionate sexual romp the Duchess anticipated (3.2.69-70).²¹ The common early modern linking of tongue and phallus is, of course, in evidence, as is Ferdinand’s objection to the gender inversion of the Duchess playing the wooer, which is highlighted in his attempt to regain what he sees as his rightful prerogative in silencing her: “Do not speak” (3.2.76). The incomplete line that follows—“No, sir” (3.2.77)—heightens her supposed breach. However, when he accuses her of being “past all bounds” in her actions, she is moved again to speak in her defense: “I pray, sir, hear me: I am married” (3.2.84). Comparing her attempts to justify herself to the noise of a “screech owl,” he condemns her secret marriage and refuses to acknowledge her husband. His response is unequivocally designed to silence her, Philomela-like: “If you do love him, cut out thine own tongue / Lest it bewray him” (3.2.110-11). Her persistence in arguing that she should be allowed to marry since she has not attempted “to create / Any new world or custom” only enrages him further, causing him to link the imagery of her silencing to the grave (3.2.112-13). He claims that in exercising her will to remarry against his wishes

she has dismantled her first husband's grave and encased Ferdinand's heart in "that massy sheet of lead / That hid thy husband's bones" (3.2.114-15). This image encompasses the Duchess as well. She questions, "Why should only I, / Of all the other princes of the world, / Be cased up, like a holy relic?" (3.2.140-42). This encounter, with its linking of silencing and entombment, not only foreshadows the Duchess's death, but fundamentally changes the discursive freedom the Duchess earlier enjoyed with Antonio, which is now reduced to "short syllables [that] / Must stand for periods" (3.2.180-81). Instead of the free exchange that earlier obtained between the two, the Duchess is forced to signal her affection by remarking in a speech intended to be overheard by Bosola and the officers that she has "signed [his] quietus," a private reference to their exchange of vows, and an ironic portent of his fate as a result (3.2.190).

Similar imagery continues in subsequent scenes. Especially notable is the Duchess's use of Portia as an exemplum of the ideal wife after Bosola discovers the spectacle designed to convince her that her family is already dead. When the Duchess begs to die, to be bound to Antonio's lifeless body, Bosola urges her to live. She responds,

That's the greatest torture souls feel in hell,
In hell: that they must live and cannot die.
Portia, I'll new-kindle thy coals again,
And revive the rare and almost dead example
Of a loving wife. (4.1.70-74)

The ambiguous phrase, “almost dead example,” refers at once to Portia, who died with live coals in her mouth in an attempt to protect her husband, and who presumably had fallen out of favor as an exemplum of wifely virtue, and to the Duchess herself, who is a loving wife who is herself “almost dead” but is desirous of re-embodying Portia’s death. Her desire to die is further emphasized by her metaphor of the world as a theater in which she is forced to play a part she has not chosen: “I account this world a tedious theater, / For I do play a part in’t ’gainst my will” (4.1.84-85). This metaphor stands in marked contrast to Mariam’s choice to play the part of scornful wife in spite of its potential dangers. As Jankowski observes, the Duchess willingly accepts the passive role of victim-martyr that is proffered to her (241-42).²²

The scene in which the Duchess dies, which in *Mariam* also occurs just before the final act of the play but offstage, reinforces the previous images of the caged bird and the kneeling monument. The Duchess likens herself to a bird when she tells Cariola that “The robin redbreast and the nightingale / Never live long in cages”; and Bosola asks the Duchess, “Didst thou ever see a lark in a cage? Such is the soul in the body” (4.2.13-14, 126-27). The Duchess is the caged bird, imprisoned not in her marriage, as Mariam was, but because of it. Bosola tries to convince her of the weakness of her mortal body, using vivid domestic images, in particular his final suggestion that she is a “more unquiet bedfellow” than a teething infant (4.2.137), a speech which Haber sees as a rape that “reappropriates and redemonizes” the bedroom scene (“‘My Body Bestow’” 147). She nevertheless struggles to maintain her sense of identity, the will that was emphasized in the early scenes. She claims, “I am Duchess of Malfi still” (4.2.137). Findlay aptly calls

her self-assertion not “a declaration of social status” but of identity, particularly her married, maternal, “self-fashioned” identity (*Feminist Perspective* 104-05). She is Duchess of Malfi not in spite of her secret marriage, but because of it. Perversely, too, she is Duchess of Malfi in her willingness to act as blood sacrifice for her family.

Bosola becomes her “tomb-maker,” as he says, not only literally but figuratively, reinforcing the image of the kneeling monument that we observed her rising from at the beginning of the play (4.2.144). Her last concerns are for the execution of her “will,” which, since she has been deprived of all her wealth, takes the form of instructions to Cariola to treat her son’s cold and oversee her daughter’s prayers (4.2.195, 197). When Bosola threatens her with the cord with which he would strangle her, she claims to be unconcerned “to have my throat cut / With diamonds” (4.2.213-14). Then she willingly accepts her own silencing, saying first “I would fain put off my last woman’s fault: I’d not be tedious to you,” and then, immediately afterward, “Dispose my breath how please you” (4.2.223-24, 225). She subsequently kneels, invites her brothers to “feed in quiet” on her bodily sacrifice, and is strangled (4.2.234). Findlay remarks that strangling as the method of her death seems particularly significant in that it “silences the self-proclaiming female voice” (*Feminist Perspective* 103). But it should be noted that the Duchess willingly sacrifices that voice because she believes Antonio already dead. In kneeling to accept the garrote, she is reinscribed as funerary art, according to Rose, an emblem of “her permanent status as an unattainable ideal” (171).²³ Her companionate marriage to Antonio destroyed by her brothers’ desires and ambitions, she returns to the utter silence and submission implied by the cold stone monument kneeling at the foot of

her husband's tomb.

Mariam's death, on the other hand, results in neither her submission nor her silence. Herod clearly expects a delightfully submissive wife upon his return. His anticipatory description of her evokes a "rare creature," with a face "more bright" than the sun, whose beauty outshines "all your Roman beauties," including Caesar's famously beautiful wife, Livia (4.1.10, 11, 25).²⁴ But this idealized Mariam clearly appeals only to his eye, a silent image that vividly contrasts the reality he is about to experience. In addition, the Mariam evoked here is made more valuable by her confinement within Jerusalem, within his palace, by his control over her. Like the "compass'd limits" to which he urges his eyes to "be contain'd" in his impatience to see her, she enriches Jerusalem, in his view, by being constrained within it (4.1.33-34). As Quilligan remarks, "the terms of sexual control are there to ensure the verbal blankness—so to speak—of the other, the conformability of the will of the wife to her husband" (227). Ostman makes a further distinction by noting a difference between Mariam's and Salome's actions in the play in that, while Salome can actively enhance her brother's political power, Mariam is able to do so only passively (201). And it is to this passive, compliant wife that Herod believes he has returned.

Instead, Mariam enters wearing mourning garments and explaining, "I suit my garment to my mind" (4.3.91). Bell describes her transformation at this point "into a conventional Petrarchan lady, cold but virtuous" (28). Mariam boldly accuses Herod of plotting against her by killing Hircanus and Aristobolus, which he vehemently denies, saying that Hircanus intended to kill him, and claiming to genuinely mourn the

accidental loss of Aristobolus. But rather than accepting his version of events, as she has apparently done in the past, she challenges it: “I know that, moved by importunity, / You made him priest, and shortly after die” (4.3.137-38). The awkward syntax suggests not only that Aristobolus died suspiciously soon after he became high priest, but also that Herod was directly responsible since *die* might be read as part of a compound object, thus *you made him die*. His response is a swift and unequivocal warning: “I will not speak, unless to be believed, / This froward humour will not do you good” (4.3.139-40). And, although Mariam clearly has dissembled in the past, she stands firm in the conviction she expressed in act 3 no longer to do so because she now perceives the instability of her relationship to Herod. She says, “I cannot frame disguise, nor never taught / My face a look dissenting from my thought” (4.3.145-46). Critical reaction to Mariam’s stance at this moment in the play is somewhat mixed.²⁵ I would agree with Findlay, Raber, and others who emphasize the agency of Mariam’s actions at this juncture. In comparison to the Duchess, who to a large extent capitulates to her tormentors and dies regardless of her submission, Mariam asserts herself and maintains a far greater degree of discursive agency in the face of her tyrant husband.

Mariam’s representation becomes more complicated, but, I would argue, no less powerfully dependent upon her own discursive choices, once she realizes that virtue and beauty are not sufficient to save her. When the Butler brings in a poisoned drink for Herod, reportedly sent by Mariam (presumably because Sohemus revealed that, yet again, Herod had ordered Mariam killed if he died), Herod promptly and decisively orders Sohemus killed. Mariam denies having sent the drink, but does not respond to the

Butler's conjecture about why she sent it. In a conflation of tongue and tomb imagery similar to that in *The Duchess of Malfi*, Herod sees Mariam here as a "false creature" because her foul interior, as judged by her opened mouth, belies her beautiful exterior—a clear echo of the "painted sepulcher" that Constabarus used earlier to depict Salome (4.4.227, 2.4.325). Drawing his conclusions based on what he sees as her froward behavior, Herod ascribes actions and motives to Mariam in a harshly vituperative accusation of her infidelity with Sohemus. Two specific terms in Herod's overly hasty charges seem linked to a decisive change in Mariam's representation: first, he calls her a "white enchantress"; and then he makes reference to his command, not for her *death*, but for her "slaughter" should he himself die (4.4.176, 182). As Weller and Ferguson note, both of these terms had specific religious connotations in the period (167n, 168n). The phrase "white devil" occurs in late sixteenth-century religious and secular literature, referring to a damagingly deceptive woman, and here confirming Herod's demonization of Mariam, whom he believes has inappropriately enticed Sohemus with her beauty. "Slaughter" seems a clear allusion to Herod the Great's slaughter of the innocent children of Bethlehem after being informed of Jesus's birth by the wise men (see Matt. 2:1-16; Weller and Ferguson 20-21).

Mariam's response, or sudden lack thereof, takes on religious overtones as well. She speaks only two lines in the remainder of the scene. In the first half-line, a response to Herod's sudden change of demeanor and his unexpected and patently false accusations, she questions whether she is dreaming. In the remainder, a recalculation of her stance in response to Herod's direct threat of her death, she assumes the role of

martyr. Her response when questioned about why she loved Sohemus—"They can tell / That say I loved him, Mariam says not so" (4.4.193-94)—and her subsequent silence sound distinctly like Christ before Pilate. Herod further reinforces this association of Mariam with Christ by calling her "the fairest lamb/ Of all the flock" (4.4.248-49).

The most well-known critical exploration of Mariam as a Christian martyr remains that of Beilin, who explores the play's climax as a crucifixion allegory, and Mariam as representing Christian virtue and, specifically, the Marian ideal because of its reliance on "the private sphere of silent feminine virtue and the public world of masculine discourse" (170-75, 175).²⁶ Ferguson's recent analysis adds a significant Catholic element to the religious imagery of the final acts of the play. Ferguson bases her argument for Cary's early religious leanings, for which no evidence beyond the clearly biased biography is available, on Cary's use of the Catholic Thomas Lodge's translation of Josephus as her source and on the device of Cary's printer, an emblem of Truth scourged, which had connotations of Catholic dissent ("Allegories" 268-69, 304-07). In addition, in trying to convince the indecisive Herod to execute Mariam, Salome undercuts Mariam's charms, including her "beauteous language," by accusing her of having a heart as "false as powder," a likely allusion to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, a reputed Catholic plan to blow up the House of Parliament while Parliament and James I were in attendance (4..429, 430).²⁷ Ferguson notes the centrality of the idea of equivocation, stressing its occurrence in an early modern atmosphere that encouraged wordplay, and its appropriateness as a discursive strategy for oppressed groups, particularly for Jews (like Mariam) and Catholics (like Cary), but also for women (272-

80, 267).

What I wish to highlight here is the gender inversions on which *The Tragedy of Mariam*'s religious elements depend, inversions that are more pronounced than in *The Duchess of Malfi*, which also draws on discourses of the female Christian martyr. Although the Duchess's onstage suffering seems closer to the Catholic continental tradition of female bodily display,²⁸ she is displayed as Christ-like, as sharing in Christ's suffering. Mariam far more palpably *is* Christ. Her speech, her demeanor, her actions before Herod and on the way to her execution become those of Jesus before his judges and on the way to his crucifixion. At the same time, she is also John the Baptist, beheaded by Herod Antipas, Herod the Great's son, at the urging of his wife Herodias and her daughter, coincidentally also named Salome, like Herod the Great's sister.²⁹ Weller and Ferguson suggest that Cary takes advantage of the conflation of historical Herods in the popular mystery plays of her time (21-22). The effect of this, then, further affirms the doubling of the specifically male roles suggested for Mariam, who, like John, prophesies, and like Jesus, embodies the early (and, perhaps, in Cary's mind, distinctly Catholic) church. Ferguson argues that Cary leaves it up to the reader to determine whether or not Mariam is a type of Christ, whether or not she is John the Baptist (329). Whether or not one agrees with Ferguson's quite compelling reading of the equivocal nature of the play, Mariam clearly inverts gender roles in a more powerful and more public way than does the Duchess.

Gender inversion also occurs prominently in the following scene, which might be read as Mariam's examination of conscience. Here, rather than the appropriation of a

male religious model, the centrality of the female and of motherhood is reinscribed. The imprisoned Mariam thinks back over her faults, contrasting herself to “False Cleopatra,” and realizes that she has erred in not being humble as well as chaste (4.8.538). However, just as she is congratulating herself on gaining heaven because of her innocence—“In Heav’n shall Mariam sit in Sara’s lap,” she says (4.8.574)—Herod’s first wife, Doris, enters to accuse Mariam of adultery. Doris is driven by bitterness and jealousy, as well as by a distinctly Catholic view of marriage in comparison to the Mosaic law Mariam cites in her defense.³⁰ When Doris threatens to curse Mariam’s children, Mariam kneels before her, assuming a posture of atonement and saying, “Thy curse is cause that guiltless Mariam dies” (4.8.68). *Guiltless* is frequently read as an adjective, suggesting that Mariam still sees herself as spotless. But *guiltless* might also function here as an adverb, indicating a consciousness on Mariam’s part that she indeed has wronged Doris. Vengeful Doris, however, not satisfied, begs God to “plague the mother much: the children worse” (4.8.616). Mariam’s tone in response is difficult to read. She “hope[s],” suggesting some uncertainty, that the curse will fall on Doris rather than herself, and she claims in spite of her youth to have known the earth “too, too long,” another acknowledgment, perhaps, of her sinfulness (4.8.628). The maternal impulse that drives Mariam to her knees, and that perhaps brings her to an awareness of her own guilt within a patriarchal system that allows men to replace their wives at will, is akin to the distinctly maternal image of Mariam cradled in Sara’s lap. Rather than David (like Herod, known for his womanizing), nestled in the bosom of Abraham, this foundational patriarchal image of the church is replaced with a female equivalent.

Decapitating Discourse

The agency exercised by Mariam, particularly as suggested by the religious imagery that surrounds her, is thus more powerful than that suggested in the Duchess's final speeches. Dolan's work emphasizes women's scaffold speeches as "an arena of boundary crossing, negotiation, and possibilities for agency" ("Gentlemen" 157).³¹ This seems more directly applicable to Mariam, whose speech to an audience at her public (if offstage) beheading is echoed, as it were, to Herod after her death, than to the Duchess, whose final speech has no other internal audience than her executioners and whose echo assumes a quite different character than Mariam's. The differences in degree of agency that I have suggested are highlighted by the manner in which each character "speaks" after her death in her respective play's fifth act.

In the fifth act of *The Duchess of Malfi*, a voice that Antonio believes sounds like the Duchess echoes his voice in an apparent attempt to warn him that he is in mortal danger. Critics have responded rather differently to this echoing voice. Bartels suggests that the Duchess "ultimately gets the last word" through her echo, while Kalpin notes a certain degree of agency in the echo and sees it as a "potentially important intervention" (423; 162-63). Others see the echo as a perpetuation of the repressive environment that led the Duchess to seek a secret marriage in the first place. For instance, Reina Green claims that the Duchess becomes "the ideal listening wife" after death and that the stichomythia of the abbey scene emphasizes the speakers' cross-purposes rather than the engaged argument more common in such exchanges (467-68). Haber sees the "disembodied, confused echo" as a deconstruction of the positive space the Duchess

previously had constructed (““My Body Bestow”” 147). Finally, Findlay views the echo as the “return of the repressed female spirit” (*Feminist Perspective* 105).

I would side with those critics who see the echo as illustrative of the Duchess’s eventual conformity to the prevailing patriarchal standards for aristocratic wifely (and sisterly) behavior. She speaks 10 times, each time repeating Antonio’s words verbatim, with the insignificant exceptions of the added syllables “Ay” and “Oh” (5.3.28, 39). This seems an extreme version of wifely decorum, in which the wife was to speak only as her spouse permitted, here restricted to a literal echo of his own speech. In addition, although the potential for a positive outcome based on the warning echo does exist, as Kalpin has argued (163), it is imperative to note that the echo is neither fully apprehended nor heeded by its intended audience. Delio remarks, “The dead stones seem to have pity on you / And give you good counsel” (5.3.40-41). But Antonio resolves not to talk with the dead echo and, as he says, “mark[s]” only the repetition “*Never see her more*” because of his grief over his wife’s death (5.3.47, 46). In the end, he decides that to listen to the ghostly dissuading voice is a dishonor to the life that he shared with the Duchess, lending little credence and still less agency to her echo.

Mariam, on the other hand, seems literally to step aside from Herod’s attempts to control her representation and to gain her greatest degree of discursive agency in the echoes of her voice heard through the Nuntio after her death. As Corporaal convincingly asserts, Mariam defies the attempts of both Herod and the broader patriarchy he represents to “control . . . her signification” in this scene (““To be”” 200). Furthermore, her choice of the Nuntio to carry her message displays a significant degree of

“autonomy” and personal control over its voicing (199).³² The Nuntio describes himself as being one of “the curious gazing troop” watching Mariam’s fearless composure in the face of the executioner, hoping to catch a glimpse of “the sun-admiring phoenix,” as he calls her (5.1.21, 24). Rather than responding to Alexandra’s harangue, she chooses the Nuntio purposefully from among the crowd:

When justly opposite to me she came,
 She pick’d me out from all the crew:
 She beckon’d to me, call’d me by my name,
 For she my name, my birth, my fortune knew. (5.1.59-62)

Her careful selection of the Nuntio is significant for several reasons: it shows her intent to have her speech recorded and received; she chooses someone who makes an appropriate and credible messenger to Herod (whereas Alexandra or some other female would not); and this messenger is not biased against her, but instead flattered to be selected for this important job by his queen.

The speech the Nuntio repeats to Herod is only four lines in length and is frequently interrupted by Herod, who tries unsuccessfully even after her death to maintain “control” over Mariam’s “sentence” (5.1.74). Yet, because of both the ambiguity of her reported words and her clear faith in her resurrection, ironically affirmed by the resurrection of her voice after her death, he is unable to do so. The Nuntio repeats, ““Tell thou my lord thou saw’st me loose my breath” (5.1.73). Quilligan comments on the ambiguity of *loose* (as well as the ambiguity of *sentence* in Herod’s response in the line following) (227).³³ Mariam’s final reference to Herod’s wish to

resurrect her “By three days hence” indicates her faith that, like Christ, she goes to her grave without guilt and that she will indeed be resurrected (5.1.77). Her speech so convinces Herod that he immediately begins resurrecting her—in the most painful and agonizing way possible for the audience. Indeed, the Chorus, who have seemed intent heretofore on condemning Mariam’s actions at every turn, ironically end by naming her “guiltless Mariam,” the same phrase that she used of herself in act 4, scene 8 (5.1.272; 4.8.608).

Although Mariam’s body quite literally is “divided from her head,” her deliberate, careful speech is more effective now than previously (5.1.90). Herod hangs on her every word in a way he apparently never did while she was alive, and he reverses his opinion of her based on this final speech, memorializing her in his grief and finally recognizing Salome’s duplicity.³⁴ He revivifies her as best he can after the gruesome fact, figuratively rejoining her body and soul by acknowledging “that Heav’n in her did link / A spirit and a person to excel” (5.1.245-46). Mariam’s speech also reinforces her role as a type of Christ, her message living on in the promise of Christian resurrection, empowering her words.³⁵ Most intriguing, though, is the suggestion of numerous critics that Mariam’s voice lives on by placing the reader in an interpretive role. Purkiss states that Mariam is a martyr in the sense that her body becomes “an ethical text, or witness (the literal meaning of martyr), readable by others as a sign of what is and is not good” (38). According to McGrath, Mariam “hovers in an interpretive space where she is both powerless victim and heroic agent” in the final act (185). Finally, although Ferguson views the text as more equivocal than the reading I have encouraged here, she argues

compellingly that it forces the reader to decide how Mariam should be judged (“Allegories” 329). Placing the reader in an active position gives greater weight to Mariam’s words, thus allowing them to be continually resurrected. Mariam’s voice is finally heard not only by Herod, but by Cary’s audience as well.

The social implications for women suggested by these two quite similar plays differ, then, in substantial ways that may be, at least in part, a function of the authors’ genders. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the main character challenges prevailing standards for aristocratic marriage by quietly choosing the mate she desires and by continuing to rule with no obvious disruption of her status. As Bartels suggests, it is significant that the Duchess establishes her right to act as a wife, not a widow, an illustration on Webster’s part of the general challenging of women’s containment in marriage that occurred in the early-seventeenth century (423). However, Webster’s brief glimpse of a productive and progressive marriage in which the wife’s scope of action and her verbal interactions with her spouse are not limited by her marital status is offered only to be retracted in the end. The Duchess’s death reinstitutes her containment. It seems important to note, however, that the Duchess’s treatment by her brothers, although it has its roots in traditional aristocratic notions of marriage and property, is presented largely as a familial aberration. Ferdinand’s desire to control his sister and her property as well as his intense, sexualized jealousy of any man she chooses for herself drive him mad, while the Cardinal’s inappropriate sexual behavior and his thirst for the deaths of his sister and Antonio reveal him as fallen as well. The atmosphere of the court at Malfi, presented in the opening scene as decayed and ignoble in comparison to the French court, results

from the influence of the Duchess's brothers. The positive nature of the Duchess's marriage, and its potential to reinvigorate and transform not only the institution of marriage—which the Cardinal refers to as “entrance into some prison” when he warns the Duchess against a secret marriage (1.1.326)—but also the larger society surrounding her, is firmly foreclosed upon in her submissive death and her hollow fifth-act echo.

The Tragedy of Mariam, in contrast, suggests a more active critique of the larger societal forces that produced it. Critics offer various theories about exactly what Cary is critiquing—social codes, political institutions, gender constructions, or some combination of these—but most seem to agree with Gutierrez that the fifth act requires a response (114). And most see in Cary's play a clear critique of patriarchy.³⁶ Cary's perspective has larger social implications than Webster's because her play makes clear that Mariam's situation is the result of oppression of women, not just within familial structures, but within patriarchal society itself, which is perpetuated through ongoing structures of substitution and repetition.³⁷ Herod replaces Hircanus, much as Caesar later displaces Anthony; Mariam substitutes for Doris; Aristobolus takes the position of Ananelus, the previous high priest, who resumes the priesthood after Aristobolus drowns; Silleus is exchanged by Salome for Constabarus, just as Constabarus replaced Josephus. In every substitution, every repetition, the virtuous woman has no place, no voice. According to Findlay, “Cary suggests that institutions which rely on a paranoid exclusion and abuse of women are radically unbalanced. In such an environment female self-assertion and self-integrity is impossible to sustain” (*Feminist Perspective* 157). Such unstable patriarchal structures, particularly those which allow men easily to replace

their wives, poison not only women's relationships with men, but women's attempts to relate to one another, resulting in the fractious, debilitating, and eventually deadly conflicts in which Mariam finds herself engaged with Alexandra, Doris, and Salome as well as with Herod.

Like the Duchess, Mariam is a slandered innocent, caught in a verbal battle about marriage that costs her life. But Cary sees the battle in more pervasive social terms than does Webster. Her female perspective makes her play at once more critical of prevailing discourses and more hopeless about the possibility of reform.

Notes

¹ Wolfe notes a contradiction between Cary's claims to poverty in her letters and evidence from Conway and his agent that suggests that she kept "a plentiful Table" in spite of this ("Family Affair" 98). I am less concerned here with the veracity of her argument than with the argument itself.

² Using Arbella Stuart's secret marriage to William Seymour as "a close contemporary parallel," Steen argues that reactions to the Duchess's marriage would have been considerably mixed in Webster's time as well ("Crime of Marriage" 62).

³ See also Whigham, to whose argument about conflicts in the play between residual and emergent cultural mechanisms Rose is responding.

⁴ For dates of composition, see Weller and Ferguson (5); and Straznicky (106n7). On Cary's involvement in Sidney family literary activities and on her activities as patron in her own right, see Weller and Ferguson (5); and Straznicky (104-05, 107-09). Weller and Ferguson examine the play's intertextual echoes with *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra* (41-42) as well as suggesting its possible use as a source for *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* (6). In addition, Lodge suggests it as a source for Middleton and Rowley's *A Fair Quarrel* (63).

⁵ See Raber (*Dramatic Differences* 13-14); Shannon (144-45); and Straznicky (110-14). See also Gutierrez, who was one of the first to call attention to the play's genre.

⁶ Others who note closet drama's suitability for female writers include Clarke (250) and Corporaal ("To be in one self chest" 190-91).

⁷ In a political system that was seen as analogous to marriage, the domestic and political are, of course, hopelessly intertwined. For a study that focuses more closely on the play's political implications, see, for example, Raber's detailed examination in Chapter 4 of *Dramatic Difference*, in which she argues that the play critiques the larger political system for its dependence on a domestic patriarchy that "generates, rather than resolves, instability in its subjects" (149-87, 172). See also Straznicky; Shannon; and Oh.

⁸ See Ferguson's excellent chapter in *Dido's Daughters* ("Allegories of Subjection"); also Callaghan ("Re-Reading").

⁹ I must say that I strenuously disagree with Purkiss's conclusion that Cary's and Lumley's "male" educations prevent them from critiquing the prevailing ideological system (40-41).

¹⁰ All references to *The Duchess of Malfi* are to the Norton edition, editors Bevington et al; all references to *The Tragedy of Mariam* are to the Weller and Ferguson edition.

¹¹ Rose comments on the Duchess's construction as funerary art in her death, but does not connect that to the use of the image in the opening scene (171). Engle, in his introduction to the play, observes a cycle from kneeling statue in the Duchess's widowhood at the opening to kneeling statue in her death at the end of the play (1753), but does not observe her pointed attempt to contradict that image here.

¹² Theodora Jankowski argues that the Duchess draws on Protestant models of companionate marriage in choosing Antonio as her husband rather than her consort, but

she also stresses the subversive and unconventional inversion of traditional marital roles (“Defining/Confining” 230-36).

¹³ As Findlay notes, the betrothal scene is not without its sinister undertones (*Feminist Perspective* 102). One of these is clearly the *quietus est* that the Duchess says she is signing for Antonio when she kisses him, which, ironically, will inevitably procure his final *quietus*.

¹⁴ Bell says that the Chorus “speaks for society at large, subjecting individual characters to the prevailing ideology” and that “we can infer that it is made up of men who feel that they and their male peers have the right to control their wives, body and mind” (30).

¹⁵ See *The Lady Falkland: Her Life* (195). Ferguson notes the discrepancy between the Chorus’s and Mariam’s understandings of this motto (“Spectre” 186).

¹⁶ Of interest is Elizabeth’s reference in the same speech to the distinction between being and seeming. Just a few sentences prior to the milkmaid image, she discusses the idea that each individual, including herself, is responsible for his or her own faults, saying “The best way, I suppose, for you and me were by humble prayers to require of God that not in weighing but in perfect weight, *in being not in seeming*, we may wish the best and further it with our abilities” (169, emphasis added). Although the speech appears to have had a small audience upon delivery, several copies of it apparently circulated afterward, including those later in the possession of Stanford, Nicholas Bacon, and John Harington (167n1). Whether Cary might have seen this speech is intriguing, but purely speculative.

¹⁷ Heather Ostman, applying distinctions made by Erasmus in *Lingua*, sees Mariam as the flatterer (based on her previous dissembling with Herod) and Salome as the backbiter (192). Bennett links the representations of both women to the nature of gender performance, seeing Salome as like Mariam, rather than her opposite, as most other critics have contended. She claims that Mariam “attempts to articulate herself as a unified subject,” while Salome presents instead “her own multifaceted image,” a fluid female performativity that creates a great cultural unease in the period (“Female Performativity” 304). Raber argues that Salome’s cynicism about disrupting tradition and the way in which she consciously uses her femininity to negatively influence her brother highlight the constructed nature of gender (*Dramatic Difference* 167).

¹⁸ Callaghan, for instance, refers to the “unsullied femininity of the dramatically insipid Graphina” (“Re-Reading” 187).

¹⁹ Mariam’s refusal to dissimulate has led, of course, to considerable critical comment. See Bennett’s comments regarding Mariam’s performance of herself as subject (“Female Performativity” 301-02). Ostman interprets this change as Mariam’s refusal of her previous role as Herod’s flatterer (195). Ferguson describes Mariam’s fault as “verbal openness” combined with “sexual closedness” (“Spectre” 188).

²⁰ See, for example, Findlay (*Feminist Perspective* 103-04); and Jankowski (227-29).

²¹ Haber discusses this scene in a similarly sexualized vein (“‘My Body Bestow’” 143-44).

²² On traditional discourses of women as martyrs, see Dolan (“Gentlemen”).

²³ This funerary image is further enhanced by Bosola taking up her dead body at the end of the scene in what Martha Lifson describes as a grotesque pieta (56).

²⁴ Acheson argues that the untheatrical nature of the female characters in *Mariam* is, in part, a protest against a culture that defined women by their appearance and performance (““Outrage your face””) 9-10). While I would agree with her conclusion, I would disagree about the untheatrical nature of the characters.

²⁵ Straznicky sees it as evidence of “unrestrained personal will” and therefore “a moral weakness” in terms of the stoic discourse in which she sees Cary’s play as participating (127). Ferguson blames Mariam’s fate on her failure to equivocate, a strategy that she believes the play advocates, and argues the untruthfulness of Mariam’s insistence on “the existence of any gap between her ‘look’ (appearance), her ‘speech,’ and her ‘meaning’” (“Allegories” 295). On the other hand, Findlay and Raber see her actions as laudable, Findlay calling this “an act of personal integrity” and Raber suggesting that hers is an attempt to promote “a stable and unified self” (*Feminist Perspective* 154; *Dramatic Difference* 165). Similarly, Luckyj describes Mariam’s position as “culturally legitimate” as a result of Herod’s violation of the norms of companionate marriage and the play’s emphasis on common fears of female hypocrisy (“Historicizing Gender” 140-41).

²⁶ See also Dolan (“Gentlemen”); and Purkiss. Raber detects a pattern of resistance on Mariam’s part of denying Herod her body, claiming her mind as her own, and then claiming her soul as free (*Dramatic Difference* 171).

²⁷ For more on the Gunpowder Plot, see Dolan (*Whores of Babylon* 45-49).

²⁸ Dolan argues that Cary participates in a more heavily Protestant English aesthetic which preferred to deemphasize bodily female suffering (“Gentlemen” 166).

²⁹ Purkiss notes that the public beheading described by the Nuntio for Mariam was inappropriate for a queen in the early modern period (38-39).

³⁰ See the previous discussion of Salome’s view of divorce (208-09). See also Findlay on the “particularly sinister resonances” of this scene “if performed or read in a private household” (*Feminist Perspective* 153).

³¹ Kalpin also focuses on the scaffold speeches of these two plays; however, I think it important to note that the persuasive effect (or lack thereof) that Kalpin describes in women’s curtain scenes in general and the resultant anxieties she pinpoints are themselves representations, perhaps calling into question her generally negative assessment of women’s ability to speak persuasively.

³² See also Kalpin for a discussion of Mariam’s choice of the Nuntio (153-54). I disagree, however, with Kalpin’s conclusion that Mariam is “void of the desire to speak” and that hers is “an empty performance fitting a scripted role” (157).

³³ Weller and Ferguson also note that *loose* “may emphasize the persistence (or resumption) of Mariam’s agency in her final moments” (174n). Kalpin sees the ambiguity of the word choice as making Mariam’s death “an act of passivity *and* agency” (155).

³⁴ The historical Herod, as Cary’s readers would surely know, forgets these lessons rather quickly.

³⁵ Corporaal remarks on this aspect of Mariam's voice ("“To be in one self chest”" 201). Kegl discusses the Nuntio's account of Mariam's death as a substitution of a "typological narrative" for "a competing dynastic narrative" endorsed by Herod, therefore making her challenge to Herod less "unseemly," yet still retaining the force of her religious objection (149).

³⁶ Some see the play as a debate, allowing Cary to raise questions about the normative view of marriage and women. For instance, in noting the jarring dissonance between the Chorus's speeches, which she associates with "society at large," and those of the other characters, Bell suggests that "Cary invites her audience to question conventional attitudes toward femininity, marriage and political power" (30, 32). Shannon sees the play as offering a two-dimensional wisdom between "conventional choral wisdom" and "feminist or reforming wisdom" in the debate over social discourses regarding women (147-48). Miller focuses instead on the discord between the female characters in the play, claiming that "Cary demonstrates the mutually destructive potential of female homosocial bonds in the face of masculine oppression" (367). Others focus on the play's attention to gender construction, often noting its intersections with political structures. Ostman highlights male reliance on women to construct their power, saying "The dependency of Herod on the speech (or silence) of his wife and sister betrays the contradictions in a patriarchy: the man who claims power over women needs them to construct that power" (203). Raber asserts that Cary is critiquing women's relationship to theatricality and to the role of theatricality in the state. She also singles out the role of theater in producing an awareness of the constructed nature of gender and

in reproducing hegemonic gender discourses, suggesting that theater's "revelation that gender is constructed is nowhere translated historically into progressive changes in cultural beliefs about women" (*Dramatic Difference* 177-81, 182). Ferguson concludes that "the play offers a serious inquiry into the legitimacy of any state that is supported on and with reference to the institution of patriarchal marriage" ("Allegories" 331).

³⁷ See Weller and Ferguson on the structural substitutions in the play (38).

CHAPTER VI
 ABSENT MOTHERS, PRESENT DAUGHTERS: EMBODYING
 THE FEMALE IN COURTSHIP

In May 1594, Maria Audley and Thomas Thynne married secretly, knowing that bad relations between the two families would complicate a betrothal. Almost one year later, when Thomas's parents, John and Joan Thynne, discovered the marriage, they attempted to have it invalidated, arguing that Thomas had been entrapped by Maria.¹ Their challenge proved unsuccessful, and, based on the surviving evidence of Maria's letters, Thomas and Maria appear to have had an affectionate, if at times tempestuous, relationship (see 58-61). However, John and Joan never reconciled themselves to their son's choice of a marriage partner. Given the close connection between Shakespeare's patron Henry Carey, Lord Chamberlain, and the Thynnes, Alison Wall suggests that this real-life scenario was the impetus for *Romeo and Juliet*, first published in quarto in 1597 (xxvi-xxvii). A letter from Maria to Joan dated 15 September 1601, the first recorded correspondence between the two women, implies that Maria had written her mother-in-law several times previously to prove her innocence, without success. In this letter, written more than six years after the marriage was discovered by the Thynnes, Maria entwines her "entreating lines" with a lock of her own red hair under the seal to prove her "unspotted innocence" (21). While Maria's gesture, vividly connecting her written voice with her body as it does, may not have convinced her mother-in-law to view her more favorably over 400 years ago, that red lock speaks to us eloquently even now, persuading us, for right or wrong, that the words of the daughter are heartfelt and worthy

of our attention.

Although certainly not the norm in early modern England, the younger Thynnes' marriage without parental permission was a common enough situation in turn-of-the-seventeenth-century England to be common fodder for the dramatic gristmill. In addition to echoing, if not inspiring, the far more tragic fates of Juliet and her Romeo, the younger Thynnes' secret marriage also recalls the plights of Hermia and Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and of Musella and Philisses in Lady Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory*. The latter two plays present comic versions of fraught courtship, specifically of matches against or absent parental advice. Particularly interesting in an examination of these two plays are the variations in representations of women's discursive agency as they negotiate difficult courtships and become new brides. Aside from the quickly suppressed glimpse Titania offers of her vestal, the mother of the changeling child, Shakespeare's representation of the rocky course of true love offers no mother figures, no dissenting Joan Thynne to accompany Egeus. The daughters of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are granted some discursive license during courtship, but, as married women, their voices eventually fade into the play's background, leaving on display silenced, disfigured representations of them, as ineffective as their absent mothers.

Wroth's play, on the other hand, reveals two mother figures—Venus and Musella's Mother—who take active roles in the play's marital arrangements, and who eventually acquiesce to and bless Musella's contrary plan. More importantly, the younger women in *Love's Victory* speak more freely and openly about wooing and wedding than their counterparts in Shakespeare's play, and they take a more active role

in negotiating their own courtships and marriages. Silvesta alone stands apart, openly and vocally opting out of the marriage market. As if she is the hidden vestal of Shakespeare's play embodied, this controlling female presence stages the play's resolution like a true dramatist, resurrecting Musella and Philisses on the Altar of Love. While Shakespeare presents women's gradual silencing as they move from courtship to marriage within a distinctly patriarchal economy, Wroth depicts women as active guides and participants in shaping and resolving similarly complicated courtships. *Love's Victory* refigures the female's role in courtship and, in its emphasis on the female characters' material bodies, particularly their voices, registers Wroth's dissatisfaction with the disfiguring representations of women's speech on the male stage.

Pairing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Love's Victory*

A discussion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Love's Victory* may seem an odd pairing in some respects. The dates of composition, though somewhat uncertain, are perhaps two decades apart; consequently, these plays are identified with distinctly different periods in English history as well as with distinct, although not dissimilar, dramatic genres. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* generally is believed to have been composed almost a decade before the end of Elizabeth's reign (and at roughly the same time as *Romeo and Juliet*), between 1594 and 1596, and was entered into the Stationer's Register in October 1600, the same year in which it was first printed in quarto (Greenblatt et al 3324, 846). The pastoral tragicomedy *Love's Victory* is more difficult to date precisely, having been circulated in manuscript form fairly late in the reign of James I, but not published until 1933 (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 94-95). Although Wroth's

play is often believed to date from the early 1620s because of its similarities to the unpublished second part of her prose romance *Urania*, Marion Wynne-Davies has recently argued for a date as early as 1614 to 1616 on the basis of biographical evidence and of Wroth's incorporation of elements from other plays in the false death scene (Miller and Waller 5; Wynne-Davies, *Women Writers* 96-97). Furthermore, while the title page of the First Quarto of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* announces that Shakespeare's comedy was performed frequently on the public stage by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, whether *Love's Victory* ever enjoyed a household performance at Wroth's country estate in Enfield or elsewhere, as has been suggested, is unknown.²

Yet many similarities between the two plays beg their comparison. Both contain multiple young couples experiencing the challenges and joys of courtship. Both plots feature one young woman who is frustrated, at least initially, in her choice of a mate by a parent who acts as a blocking figure. Both rely on magical or mythical beings to disrupt and/or orchestrate the matchmaking. Both end in multiple marriages. And both emphasize the nature of performance, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the rude mechanicals' enactment of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, and *Love's Victory* in the masque-like resurrection of the dead lovers, stage managed by Silvesta with the aid of Venus.

Still more compelling than these similarities of plot and character, however, is the likelihood that Wroth knew and was responding to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The influence on Wroth's play of pastoral tragicomedy—notable in late sixteenth-century Italian works by Torquato Tasso and Giovanni Battista Guarini, and imitated soon after in English by Philip Sidney and in an early seventeenth-century vogue led by

Samuel Daniel and John Fletcher—has been much remarked.³ In addition, her indebtedness to Shakespeare's works, particularly *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, has also been noted.⁴ What makes these moments of intertextual reference all the more compelling is Wroth's participation in court masques by Ben Jonson, including *Masque of Blackness* (1605), *Masque of Beauty* (1608), and a lost pastoral (Josephine Roberts, "Deciphering" 164-65; Shapiro, "Lady Mary Wroth" 188). Shapiro argues that Wroth had opportunities to see numerous dramatic performances at court, including those by the King's Men, during the 1604-05 and 1607-08 Christmas seasons in which she participated as a masquer. The last known performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* while Shakespeare was still with the King's Men occurred at Hampton Court on 1 January 1603/4, the season prior to Wroth's first documented involvement in dramatic entertainments (Kehler 50; Chambers 4: 118; Steele 135). But as the daughter of prominent courtier Robert Sidney and the betrothed of one of James I's newly created knights, Robert Wroth (Roberts, *Poems* 9-10), it seems entirely possible, indeed highly likely, that Mary Wroth was in attendance.

Shakespeare's Absent Mothers and Silenced Daughters

In spite of a period of disfavor from 1660 to the mid-nineteenth century—Samuel Pepys in 1662, for example, called *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life"—Shakespeare's gossamer and moonshine comedy has enjoyed great popularity since its early performances, probably by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, under the patronage of the Hunsdons (Kehler 6; Griffiths 1-2).

David P. Young was perhaps the first modern critic to take seriously the play's artistry, carefully examining its multiplicity in both stylistic and structural terms. Dorothea Kehler's more recent critical survey provides a brief chronological overview of criticism, followed by a survey according to topic (including sections on both language and gender), and concluding with an overview of performance history in England, America, and Europe.

Given the play's concern with courtship and marriage, gender issues have been, not surprisingly, a subject of considerable interest. Perhaps the most commonly accepted contemporary critical interpretations center on the cost of marriage to women and on the play's final reaffirmations of patriarchy. Shirley Nelson Garner, for instance, focuses on the powerlessness of Hermia and Helena after their return from the forest, arguing that the male characters feel compelled to sever the bonds between women and to dominate their new wives in order to overcome their own fears of "sexual powerlessness" (62). Still more compelling is Louis Montrose's exploration of male anxieties about the potential power of women in his study of Elizabethan images in the play. More recent critics tend to see Shakespeare as aware of the limitations placed on women by early modern gender conventions. For instance, Laura Levine examines the play's threats of rape in the larger context of the theater as a conscious, though unsuccessful, attempt to transform sexual violence ("Rape"). Similarly, Susan Baker relies on Bakhtinian theory to identify the various chronotopes associated with the character of Theseus in order to show the history of repression which Shakespeare's audiences had to overlook "in order to celebrate renewal and continuity at the multiple-marriage festivities" (358). A still

more recent trend has been to highlight the operation of same-sex desire within the play, including its inevitable replacement in a patriarchal system predicated on reproduction and its revelation of inherent uncertainties about gender difference, as both Valerie Traub and Bruce Boehrer have done (“(In)Significance”; “Economies”).

Interest in the language of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, like interest in its representations of gender, has been also a comparatively recent, if rather more limited, phenomenon. The earliest examinations, by René Girard and Terry Eagleton, discuss the slipperiness of language and its close connection to desire. Girard sees the lovers as users of rhetoric in its pejorative sense, in spite of the startling truthfulness of their clichés, and he reads this play as Shakespeare's negative comment on “the whole language of passion, with its constant borrowing from the fields of war, murder, and destruction” (195-96). In Eagleton's view, the “anarchic” nature of both sexuality and language, present in the play within the changing love interests in the forest and in Bottom's shifting dramatic roles, are problematic for a playwright whom he sees as upholding traditional beliefs (20, 22-23). As in Eagleton's interest in Bottom, keenest attention typically has focused on the speeches of the male characters. David Laird also examines Bottom's slippery, often arbitrary language, which he views as a threat to Theseus's linguistic power. Philip McGuire studies Egeus's silence in act 4, scene 1, when Theseus gives his permission for the young lovers to marry (“Egeus”). Although he spends some effort on Hermia's silence immediately after her nightmare and its relation to the Philomel myth, Maurice Hunt also focuses primarily on the voices of Bottom and Theseus, arguing that Theseus is a “charitable” listener and that “the true

artistic voice entails utterances that allow for crucial imaginative play between speaker and auditor” (228, 230). Hunt’s approach, although provocative, effectively reproduces the play’s exclusion (and, until more recently, the general critical exclusion) of the female as either listener or artist.

Of those few studies that devote considerable attention to the female characters’ speeches, most are concerned with the nature of representation and, borrowing from Quince’s bungling, its power to “disfigure” (3.1.52). David Marshall suggests that the disfiguring power of representation, particularly the theatrical exchange between the play and its audience, does not necessarily entail misrepresentation, but offers a potential re-presentation. He sees an analogy between the situation of the silenced and male-dominated women of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which demands that they either “be authors of their own characters or representations on which the voices and visions of others will be dictated and imprinted,” and that of the theater audience, which learns to see anew through an exchange of visions (553). On the other hand, Barbara Freedman reads the play’s treatment of its female characters as a critique of theatrical representation. She argues that the play highlights censorship, particularly through repression of the voices and visions of its women, with the end result being that it calls attention to itself as a disfiguring representation: “The play openly admits that all figuration is distortion” (206). The most thorough discussion of women’s speech in the play is Christy Desmet’s rhetorical reading, in which she concludes that the female characters revise the masculine discourse of marriage that disfigures them, replacing its duplicity, latent violence, economic imagery, and rationalism with a rhetoric of

femininity, eroticism, and friendship.

While Desmet's sensitive reading of the female characters' rhetorical styles is insightful and revealing, her case is overstated. At the end of the play, and indeed for much of the final act, the women are noticeably, and at times painfully, silent. Neither Hermia nor Helena speaks at all during the final act, although both are on stage throughout. Titania's speech is confined to four lines during the blessing of the bridal beds. Hippolyta, the sole representative of the rejuvenated courtship and marriage rhetoric that Desmet describes, has some lines—fewer than 20—but ultimately is hushed by Theseus.⁵ I agree that Shakespeare pokes fun at the not-so-smooth course of true love as the men manage it, and that a new, more feminine rhetoric is suggested, but it is proffered only to be silenced. Shakespeare offers a patriarchal society that emphasizes concord over discord in marriage and that achieves it at the expense of women's voices.

What can we learn from Shakespeare's representation of female marital and pre-marital speech in this play? The first and most pressing twist of the plot is Hermia's conflict with Egeus over her right to choose a marital partner, and it is this conflict that establishes the repeated pattern of male-female spoken interaction throughout the play: the female attempts to assert her freedom to speak regarding marriage or within marriage, yet the male ultimately controls or silences her. Egeus brings his daughter before Theseus, expecting the duke to back his demands that she marry Demetrius or be put to death if she refuses. Theseus immediately invites Hermia to speak: "What say you, Hermia?" (1.1.46).⁶ Yet before she has the opportunity to respond, he carefully instructs her on her proper deference to her father, repeating Egeus's earlier analogy of

his daughter as a wax seal, “By him imprinted, and within his power / To leave the figure or disfigure it” (1.1.50-51).⁷ This sealed letter analogy, clearly endorsed by both Theseus and Egeus, transforms Hermia into that which encloses her father’s words, but is empty of her own. Levine equates the intrusions of patriarchal control in this situation to rape, saying that Theseus repeats the violation by reinforcing Athenian law (211). Rather than being “implicitly license[d by Theseus] . . . to revise the masculine tropes that configure the discourse of romantic love and marriage,” as Desmet claims (310), I contend that the emphasis is rather on the expectation of Hermia’s unquestioning reproduction of those tropes. Even her most private communication, sealed to prevent others’ interception, should accord with her father’s wishes and further his desires rather than her own.

Yet, contrary to expectation, the first words she utters invoke her right to choose Lysander. When Theseus’ rebukes her, he again invokes the precedence of her “father’s voice” (1.1.54), compelling Hermia to acknowledge the boldness of her speech and its negative effect on her expected modesty. Yet, not unlike Maria Thynne or Arbella Stuart, who was perhaps influenced by dramatic presentations such as this in dying rather than giving up her freedom to choose William Seymour, Hermia continues to refuse “sovereignty” (1.1.82). As Freedman acknowledges, she challenges patriarchy (204). She will die rather than submit bodily to the man whom her father and her ruler have chosen for her. Hermia’s promise to meet Lysander in the woods and secretly marry him is standard Petrarchan love fare in its invocation of Cupid, Venus, and the common trope of two souls becoming one. Her inclusion of Dido, who threw herself

willingly on a funeral pyre when spurned by Aeneas, is a bit more puzzling. Although Dido was commonly used in the period as an exemplum of the good woman in the *querrelle de femmes*,⁸ the undercurrent in Hermia's speech suggests not only her awareness of the dangerous situation in which she has placed herself by agreeing to a secret marriage but also a subtle admonition of Lysander not to be another false Aeneas. Still more interesting are the words immediately following her mention of Dido:

By all the vows that ever men have broke—
 In number more than ever women spoke—
 In that same place thou hast appointed me
 Tomorrow truly will I meet with thee. (1.1.175-78)

Her exaggeration of men's inconstancy is depicted as a function of their speech—and of women's lack of it. She is keenly aware of the value of words as oaths and of the discursive norms for women in courtship that she violates. Not surprisingly, then, while Lysander urges her to "Keep promise," she begs him to "Keep word" (1.1.179, 222).

The scene immediately following, in which Quince assigns roles to his working-class acting troupe, provides an interesting commentary on the culturally mandated attempts to circumscribe Hermia's speech. When Flute, the bellows-mender, begs not to be assigned the unfortunate Thisbe's part because he has "a beard coming," Quince instructs him in much the same way as Theseus has done Hermia: "You shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will" (1.2.39-40, 41-42). Quince clearly refers to the high-pitched voices used by boy players in women's roles, yet his adjective—*small*—also evokes the common usage referring to a voice that is "[g]entle, low, soft: of

little power or strength.”⁹ In a subtle commentary on the previous scene, Flute is thus instructed to play not just Thisbe, but Hermia, a young woman who struggles mightily against masking her personal desires regarding marriage and speaking in the “monstrous little voice” allowed her by custom (1.2.44).

Once in the forest, Lysander uses Hermia’s troth to assume a greater physical intimacy, another potential rape, as he attempts to lie beside her to rest when they lose their way in the forest. Her beloved Lysander thus figures Tereus, and Hermia Philomela, in the myth invoked by the dancing fairies that begin the scene. He contradicts her argument for “humane modesty” with a pretty pun on *lie*, forcing her to say that she never thought he spoke untruthfully (2.2.63). Desmet claims that Hermia sees through Lysander’s half-truths and seductions, that Lysander is merely a “trope-producing machine,” bested by Hermia’s “wider range of rhetorical styles” (311-12). Indeed, Hermia does manage to convince Lysander to lie apart from her, but this does not invest Hermia with more power, rhetorical or otherwise, over the situation. Instead, the distance between them more easily enables Puck to apply Oberon’s love potion to Lysander’s eyes, instead of Demetrius’s, thus furthering the chain of events that separates and cruelly tests the lovers. Hermia’s immediate reaction is poignant. She awakens, extremely distraught, to describe a dream in which her heart has been eaten by a serpent as the false Lysander sits by smiling. As in the first scene, Hermia closely connects Lysander’s deception to a loss of speech: “What, out of hearing, gone? No *sound*, no *word*? / Alack, where are you? *Speak* an if you hear, / *Speak*, of all loves.” (2.2.158-60; emphasis added). Alarmed by Lysander’s lack of the “word” she had earlier

implored him to keep, she too falls silent, like Philomela, the rape here a figurative one in which Lysander wins control not of Hermia's maidenhead, but of her speech.¹⁰

Helena's experience is similar in that she too flouts expected rituals of courtship and, partly through the threat of sexual violence, eventually ends with her speech under Demetrius's control. Desmet argues that "the struggle for command of rhetorical tone is more pronounced" than in Hermia's situation, and that Helena's "ornament" is opposed to Demetrius's rhetoric of violence (312). After creating a situation in which she is able to isolate Demetrius by informing him of Hermia and Lysander's flight, Helena boldly becomes the pursuer, dogging Demetrius faithfully through the forest. He tells her plainly, "I do not nor I cannot love you" (2.1.201). But Helena remains undeterred, claiming, "I am your spaniel, and, Demetrius, / The more you beat me I will fawn on you" (2.1.202-03). These lines frequently have earned Helena a negative reputation as a woman too readily inviting her man's physical mistreatment. And, in fact, Demetrius responds by threatening not just physical, but sexual violence. However, Helena's bold, if somewhat debasing, reversal of the roles of pursuer and pursued has also garnered praise, particularly from feminist critics who see this as an example of limited agency on her part.¹¹ Trevor Griffiths' tally of lines for the play's characters, with Helena having more lines than any other character but Oberon (4), supports the argument for Helena's discursive agency within courtship.

Note, for example, Helena's conscientious reversal of Demetrius' speech in act two, in which she carefully revises each of his statements in a further attempt to win him. In response to his threat of rape, she cleverly opposes his reputation—dependent on

his “virtue” or goodness—to her own—which depends on her body, on “the rich worth of her virginity”—clearly intimating that she trusts him not to be swayed by the tempting circumstances (2.1.220, 219). In addition, she also counters the two supporting conditions bolstering his threat: she denies the darkness, saying “It is not night when I do see your face”; and she claims not to be alone, arguing “Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company; / For you in my respect are all the world” (2.1.221, 223-24). Her final statement in this speech—“Then how can it be said I am alone, / When all the world is here to look on me?” (2.1.225-26)—is at once an impassioned plea for his affection and a subtle and apparently successful reminder that, with Hermia and Lysander somewhere nearby, he cannot attempt to rape her without risking discovery.

Helena is well aware that she has reversed the usual courtship ritual, for here, as she says, “Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase” (2.1.231). As Susan Snyder remarks, however, this reversal produces “deep unease” in Helena (72). She blames her gender-inappropriate behavior on Demetrius’s bad faith in privately betrothing himself to her, and then in violating this binding commitment in order to publicly pursue Hermia: “Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex” (2.1.240). Her comment echoes the pervasive infidelity of men alluded to earlier by Hermia, which here seems to threaten the culturally appropriate behavior of both genders. Her argument is essentially that he has forced her to behave as she does, a clever justification for the forceful way in which she has revised not only Demetrius’s own arguments against her, but also the female courtship role. When Demetrius runs further into the forest, leaving her to “the mercy of wild beasts,” this unconventional woman scorned is, of course, in hot pursuit (2.1.228).

Indeed, Helena is so convinced by her performance of the woman scorned that she finds herself completely unprepared soon afterward to accept the attentions of both young Athenians. She now becomes the scorning lover, giving the two unfaithful men a comic dose of their own galling medicine. She is unmoved by the tears of a despairing Lysander, who is still under the potion's influence (see 3.2.124), and, in turn, is moved to tears herself by the elaborate (and incredibly clichéd) love protestations she previously craved and now receives from Demetrius. Newly enchanted by Puck, and true to his violent nature, Demetrius almost immediately threatens his rival Lysander with physical harm. In addition, Helena now views Hermia as a true rival, "one of this confederacy" plotting her ridicule (3.2.193).

The elaborate shifts of identity and of attachment to the other in this scene highlight the potentially frightening disruption of old bonds of friendship and affection as new bonds are forged in courtship. Helena emphasizes the previous closeness between the two women that is threatened by what she sees as Helena's recent disloyalty to her:

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods
 Have with our needles created both one flower,
 Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
 Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
 As if our hands, our sides, our voices, and minds
 Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
 Like to a double cherry: seeming parted,
 But yet an union in partition,

Two lovely berries molded on one stem. (3.2.204-12)

Helena's needlework image is not unlike that used by Arbella Stuart as a metaphor for women's creative use of language. Here, the image is combined, stitched up, as it were, with the idea of singing in unison, as if the two women's bodies, voices, and thoughts were one, an adaptation of the common Petrarchan romantic trope to describe here a distinctly embodied, distinctly female emotional intimacy. In fact, Traub suggests that the "initial erotic investment" of the two women is in each other, and Marshall claims that Helena is actually trying to catch Hermia, not Demetrius, with her refusal of his new declarations of love ("(In)Significance" 157; 558). Early modern discourses of marriage approved a wife whose mind could be easily read in her body, yet here the transparency of Helena's affection is readily available, located in the wrong body, as it were. Her double cherry speech thus evokes a homosocial union that must be disfigured through a rupture in the female body in order to preclude its threat to the patriarchal marriage system. This rupture is effected through disfiguring representations of the female body, principally its silencing.

Whereas Hermia and Helena were previously "sisters" in girlhood, indeed almost twins in Helena's description, they now undergo a differentiation that is playfully, though painfully, elaborated in jibes not only about their respective coloring (Hermia's dark to Helena's fair) and statures (Helena's tall to Hermia's short), but also their speaking styles. Perhaps predictably, Helena adopts the common male grievances about female speech, making a concerted effort to paint her friend as shrewish and herself as rational. She says, "I was never curst. / I have no gift at all in shrewishness," implying

that Hermia does; then, a bit later, she quips, “Oh, when she is angry she is keen and shrewd” (3.2.301-02, 324). In this interesting twist, Helena applies the stereotypical heterosexual complaint to a vexed same-sex friendship, rather than to a contentious courtship or marriage like Kate and Petruccio’s or Margery and Simon Eyre’s, perhaps hoping to win over Lysander and Demetrius as well as to injure Hermia with her words. Helena here clearly abandons what Desmet hails as “the doubled rhetoric of femininity” in the wistful double cherry speech (316-17) in order to trump her rival and rid herself of what she now considers Hermia’s “curst company” (3.2.343). She rejects her own bodily experiences of the value of female intimacy in order to conform to societal expectations that demand bodily obedience to her husband (as she hopes of Demetrius). Like Hermia, she eventually wins her chosen partner, but this comes about not through her own actions, but through Oberon’s patriarchally-inflected magic. Like Hermia, too, she is reduced to silence after the marriage.

The only one of the female characters already married prior to the play’s final act, Titania serves as a cautionary tale for the new wives. Although the highest ranking of the women, with her own retinue to tend and adore her, as already a wife, she is in some ways the most enslaved. From our first meeting with the king and queen of the fairies, we learn that Titania is expected by Oberon to act the subservient “lady” to his “lord,” yet she chafes at the role (2.1.63-64). She resents his attentions to other women, including Hippolyta, so much so that she has “forsworn his bed and company,” and she accuses him of so upsetting her fairy retainers with his “brawls” that all nature is out of joint (2.1.62, 87). Their disagreement is highly sexualized, affecting not only the

reproductive capacity of crops and humans, but their own as well.

Titania is also the one character in the play most closely allied with other women. At the center of her argument with Oberon is the changeling child, whom he wants as his page and whom she wants for herself in remembrance of his mother, who had been Titania's votaress. The tenderness and intimacy of the bond between the women, akin to the bond evoked by Helena's double cherry speech, is exceptionally vivid in the explanation that Titania offers to Oberon:

Full often she hath gossiped by my side,
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
 Marking th'embarked traders on the flood,
 When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
 And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind,
 Which she with pretty and with swimming gait
 Following, her womb then rich with my young squire,
 Would imitate, and sail upon the land
 To fetch me trifles, and return again
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
 And for her sake do I rear up her boy;
 And for her sake I will not part with him. (2.1.125-37)

Two studies, one by Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, and the other by Pamela Allen Brown, trace the importance of a woman's neighborhood gossips in the period

(215-17; *Better a Shrew* 60-67), and although Titania is a queen, she is depicted here as participating in this behavior usually associated with middling and lower class women. She creates a rich image of a woman with whom she laughs and converses, with whom she bathes and shares the experience of pregnancy, full of expectancy and, as so often in early modern childbirth, of unbearable grief. This is a woman whose freight is richer far than that of men's merchant ships, yet whose precious male cargo ultimately must be surrendered to the world of men, no matter how close the ties of the woman who has mothered him. Their location—"on Neptune's yellow sands"—may imply a homoerotic bond between the women because the Roman god Neptune, like Oberon, was known for his numerous seductions. In addition, Titania's solemn repetition of the phrase "for her sake" invokes the intimacy of her relationship to this unnamed votaress.¹² In fact, Oberon's demand for the child may be more a function of his jealousy over this relationship than of his need or desire for the child. As Marshall wittily remarks in describing Oberon's need to control Titania's vision, Oberon wants to be "the author of Titania's page" (552).

Of particular importance, especially given the play's preference for heterosexual coupling, is the fact that the absent votaress is the only mother of whom we are allowed even a glimpse. Hermia's mother is never mentioned; we see only Egeus as he attempts to force his daughter to marry Demetrius. Helena's mother, too, is never mentioned. She is twice identified as Nedar's daughter, and, based on this obscure name, Alan Altimont has argued recently for her Jewish parentage; this identification with an disfavored minority, coupled with Nedar's absence, puts Helena at a distinct disadvantage both in

pursuing a marriage with Demetrius and in defending her prior claim of him against Egeus. Neither of these young women have the advice or support of a mother figure as they negotiate fraught and tangled courtships. And the vivid image Titania evokes of motherly fecundity and nurturance is forestalled through the death of the votaress long before the action of the play begins. Montrose says, “Titania’s votaress is the only biological mother in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. But she is an absent presence who must be evoked from Titania’s memory because she dies in giving birth to a *son*” (73), a son whom, I would add, she is now expected to surrender to a decidedly male-dominated world.

This absent mother figure is further repressed in the course of Oberon’s revenge on Titania, for, once under the influence of Oberon’s love-in-idleness, she forgets her attachment to both the votaress and the boy in her pursuit of the asinine Bottom. Given Titania and Oberon’s contention over the votaress’s child, it seems ironic that the potion Oberon uses to trick her into this absurd love encounter is the juice of a white pansy that spontaneously bore purple blooms when Cupid’s arrow, aimed at another such “fair vestal,” missed its mark (2.1.158). As Montrose puts it, Oberon merely substitutes Bottom for the votaress, forcing another case of “a male disruption of an intimate bond between women” (75). Much like Helena, Titania reverses the common course of courtship, taking an aggressive sexual lead more typical of the male in wooing. Initially attracted by Bottom’s singing, she exclaims, “I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again. / Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note” (3.1.121-22). But as she becomes more certain of her conquest, she gradually circumscribes his movements, confining him to the wood

in much the same way that some early modern husbands restricted their wives to their households. In addition, her implied rape of Bottom has a linguistic component. She silences him, presumably because of his braying, bidding her fairies, “Tie up my love’s tongue; bring him silently” (3.1.182). Levine claims that this scene echoes and reverses the rape theme earlier suggested (215), providing a brief, but anxious, glimpse of female sexual agency in courtship. Titania reenacts Oberon’s control over her in her courtship of Bottom.

But the true aggressor is Oberon, who plans and controls a highly-charged sexual encounter that, upon awakening, Titania finds utterly repulsive. This is clearly more a violation of Titania than is Titania’s seduction of the willing Bottom. Levine depicts Titania’s bower as a representation of the female body that Oberon must violate (213-14). In orchestrating Titania’s seduction of another man, Oberon has effectively orchestrated the rape of his own wife. Subsequent to this shocking revelation of Oberon’s true power over her, the previously outspoken Titania now is silenced easily by her husband.¹³ She seems oddly content to wait for an explanation of these confusing events that likely will never come. Quite surprisingly, in spite of her impassioned protestations of love for the boy’s mother and her own apparent need to mother a child, Titania willingly surrenders the votaress’s child, an act that further sublimates the maternal in the play. It is, indeed, almost as if Titania is still drugged.

Hippolyta seems, in many ways, in the best position of all the female characters to see her marital situation clearly. After all, as Theseus reminds us in the first scene, he won his duchess at sword point. Hippolyta’s speech, only four and a half lines in length,

gives us few clues as to her attitude toward the impending nuptials. On the surface, at least, her words seem to concur with Theseus's impatience:

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night,
 Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
 And then the moon, like to a silver bow
 New bent in heaven, shall behold the night
 Of our solemnities. (1.1.7-11)

Whereas Theseus laments the dragging of time, Hippolyta emphasizes time's quick passage. Whether her tone is eager and happy, or sad and wistful is difficult to say. Her imagery, however, may be seen as dark, even warlike. Days "steep[ing] themselves in night" suggests a downward, depressive movement, and a new moon bent "like to a silver bow" easily seems hostile coming from the former Amazonian queen.

Her subsequent silence in this scene further complicates our attempts to understand Hippolyta. McGuire describes her silence as "textually indeterminate," and both he and Penny Rixon suggest that it allows her role to be determined in performance ("Hippolyta's Silence" 142; 5). I am, however, more inclined to take her silence in and of itself as a clue to her reaction; like Marshall, I read Hippolyta at this juncture as "tongue-tied" (550). This reading is inescapably influenced by the often mythic baggage that the sometime abductor/rapist/deserter Theseus brings along with him, with what Baker has termed its "structure of repression" (345), a structure of which Shakespeare's audiences would have been well aware. It also is informed by the pattern established elsewhere in the play of homosocial bonds threatened by heterosexual unions. Boehrer

reminds us that Theseus's destruction of Hippolyta's Amazonian gynococracy and his transformation of this warrior queen into conventional marriage material is an additional example of the repression of female bonds in the play (106).¹⁴

However, Hippolyta distinguishes herself from the other wives in the play by being the last of the females to be silenced. Both Hermia and Helena are onstage throughout the last act, yet neither utters a word. Their husbands apparently speak for them. After her embarrassing silencing by Oberon, Titania returns to assist in blessing the bridal beds and utters a highly conventional four lines in the fairies' song. She speaks as her husband bids her. But Hippolyta acts as sole ambassador for what might pass as the feminine point of view in response to Theseus's negative comments on poetry and the painfully inadequate performance of the rude mechanicals. And, in the process, we see Theseus instruct her in the proper response to the drama enacted before her, eventually silencing her, too.

He begins by dismissing her interests. Her keen attention to the lovers' reports of their dreams after the night in the forest—"Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of" (5.1.1)—elicits from him a long, oft-quoted speech on the conflict between reason and imagination, the latter of which he clearly holds somewhat suspect. Hippolyta, however, contradicts his view, saying that the "great constancy" of the lovers' stories argues for something not merely fanciful, but "strange and admirable" (5.1.26, 27). Interrupted by the arrival of the young lovers themselves and the necessity of deciding on the evening's entertainment, the conversation continues after Theseus commands, "take your places, ladies" (5.1.84). At this juncture, Hippolyta questions her

husband's choice of plays, opining, "I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged, / And duty in his service perishing" (5.1.85-86). In response, Theseus again lectures his new wife, this time on how to pick a proper welcome from a silent subordinate:

. . . Trust me, sweet,
 Out of this silence yet I picked a welcome.
 And in the modesty of fearful duty
 I read as much as from the rattling tongue
 Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
 Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
 In least speak most, to my capacity. (5.1.99-105)

His speech is as much a comment on marital speech as on diplomacy in the face of nervous clerks and incompetent performers, suggesting perhaps that her speech in this instance is "saucy and audacious" when it should be "tongue-tied" instead.

In spite of Theseus's subtle, yet pointed instruction, Hippolyta continues to offer occasional responses to the entertainment at hand. Her description of the prologue, on the one hand a comment on the unpracticed quality of the speech, may also be an ironic comment on her own speech, which Theseus clearly sees as "a sound, but not in government" (5.1.123). When Snout announces to the audience that he has successfully discharged the gestures and speech of the wall separating Pyramus and Thisbe, she finds it difficult to refrain from a negative comment on his flouting of dramatic conventions: "This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard" (5.1.207). Theseus gently corrects her, reminding her that the burden of imagination is on her. Her next utterance, then, merely

echoes similar statements by the men—“Well shone, Moon”—to which Theseus approvingly responds by repeating the same syntactic structure: “Well moused, Lion” (5.1.256, 258).

Hippolyta’s few remaining lines assessing the performance before her serve to underscore not only her greater artistic sensibility than the male spectators, who respond as if to a joke, but also her greater emotional investment in the spectacle. Not surprisingly, given Theseus’s persistent corrections of her attempts at speech, her compassionate reaction to Pyramus’s desperation in spite of Bottom’s abominable acting—“Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man” (5.1.279)—is easily imagined as muttered, delivered almost as an aside, in performance. This new bride, won, quite literally, in battle, responds to Pyramus’s heartrending, if bumbling, love in a way of which the male members of the audience seem quite incapable. Her subsequent criticism of the disappearance of Moonshine before Thisbe returns to find her lover dead perhaps suggests a still closer identification with Thisbe, who must now, like Hippolyta herself, encounter her lover in the dark. Hippolyta’s final line—“Methinks she should not use a long one [passionate speech] for such a Pyramus. I hope she will be brief.” (5.1.304-05)—bespeaks not only her wish for a quick end to a wretched performance, but also hints at the sentiment that few words should be wasted on undeserving men, including, perhaps, men like the one she has just married.

Although Hippolyta is the last of the wives to be silenced, I would not go so far as to suggest that it is she who has the last word, as Girard does (212). Theseus’s and Hippolyta’s differing opinions about the play effectively offer what Desmet calls a

“bifurcated perspective” on the power of dramatic entertainment to move its audience (320). Hippolyta takes on the role of skeptic in questioning Theseus’s suspicious stance toward imagination and in offering, however briefly or tentatively, an alternative interpretation of the evening’s performance.¹⁵ But hers is, however, an interpretation on which the play ultimately forecloses. Hunt argues that voice triumphs in respect to its relative weight among auditors in this play and that “the true artistic voice entails utterances that allow for crucial imaginative play between speaker and auditor” (226-30, 230). In his view, Theseus is, of course, the most “charitable” listener, as Theseus himself proclaims in the speech examined previously. Although Hunt acknowledges the importance of discordant voices in creating concord, he does not note that those voices which produce the play’s final speeches are almost exclusively male (228, 230). Despite Hippolyta’s view of imagination as wondrous and admirable, the same elevation of art over reason that we like to fancy was Shakespeare’s own view, her perspective is not the one given weight as the play ends. Freedman stresses, “Even if Hippolyta is correct, she is silenced as speaking inappropriately and so proven incorrect in advance” (206). Like the other female characters she is censored, disfigured, as Freedman explains, not only because of the impossibility of representation, but because of the disfiguring nature of dramatic (and critical) production, which privileges some perspectives and silences others (210). Although the women of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* attempt to “assume their places as speaking subjects, rhetors in their own right,” according to Desmet (305), they ultimately do not succeed in doing so.

So, if Theseus is the ideal audience, what do we make of the silent women who

remain on stage throughout the performance? Consider, for a moment, that it is actually Hippolyta who is the better audience, in spite of her at times grumpy impatience with the rustics' performance. It is she, after all, and not the male courtiers, who attends seriously to the story and responds by identifying imaginatively and emotionally with the characters and their situations. How do the other women react? We simply have no way to know how this was handled in Shakespeare's time: no stage directions solve the puzzle; no production notes survive; no diarist offers any record. Contemporary practice, of course, allows the director and actors to interpret the manner of Helena's and Hermia's silence. Lisa Moore, who played Helena in a 1994 production in Seattle, emphasizes the difficulty of being onstage with no lines in what she calls the "'mute' scene" (469). In addition, Moore's experiences in preparing and performing Helena underscore the imaginative role of the audience in the creation of characters, an experience in which early modern theatergoers, including women, probably participated in similar fashion, if Hippolyta's verbal clues are any indication. Jean Howard explains that "the ideological consequences of playgoing might be quite different for different social groups," particularly for married women, who, as we have seen, were believed by satirist Stephen Gosson (and others who opposed stage plays) to risk their reputations and put themselves imaginatively into social and sexual "'circulation'" in the theater ("Women" 83, 84).

But Hippolyta's fictional reactions in this equally fictional private theatrical setting nevertheless indicate women's potential receptivity to emergent ideas and to alternative forms of interaction with men that they encountered in actual theatrical

performances, even when those ideas and alternatives were not endorsed, were in fact silenced, by their husbands. Howard's primary contention is that "the very practice of playgoing put women in positions potentially unsettling to patriarchal control" (85). If this is so, we must ask how women, especially married women, reacted to their silencing by the fathers, husbands, and dramatists of the English stage.

Wroth's Empowered Daughters

Lady Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory* provides one woman's response, indirectly, of course, yet forcefully. Here, in contrast to the control exerted by fathers and male rulers in determining a woman's choices in courtship, the female characters exert much greater control over their own love relationships. The male-dominated fairy world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which causes Helena and Hermia to suffer the shifting alliances in the forest, is replaced by the rule of Venus, who disproportionately increases the suffering for the male characters. The gradual silencing of the female characters as they marry is replaced by a much more open dialogue between women and their partners and between the women themselves as they negotiate various love relationships. The absent mothers of Hermia and Helena are replaced by Musella's mother, who although initially a blocking figure much like Egeus, in the end fully supports her daughter's right to choose a husband for herself. And, perhaps of greatest significance, the hidden vestal of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the absent mother of Titania's changeling boy, is made manifest in her literary daughter Silvesta, who embodies not only the new possibility of a single life for women, but also the figure of the female dramatist.

In comparison to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, considerably little attention has

been paid to Wroth's play. Indeed, the two-part prose romance *Urania* and the sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (appended to part one), seem to have generated a far greater share of attention in Wroth studies than her pastoral drama. Early scholarship on the play is twofold: identifying allusions between its characters and members of Wroth's family and immediate social circle; and examining the play's contribution to the genre of pastoral tragicomedy. Roberts was the first to speculate on the play's personal allusions, and these were subsequently taken up with gusto by Wynne-Davies, who claims that the complex identifications work on multiple levels, including within the play itself; among Wroth and her contemporaries; within the previous generation of Sidneyes; and in reference to Sidneian writings, particularly those of Wroth's uncle Philip, but also those of her father, Robert Sidney. Briefly, Musella has been identified with both Wroth herself and with Penelope Rich. Phillises is associated with William Herbert, Wroth's cousin and lover, with whom she had two children after her husband's death; and also with Philip Sidney, who had hoped to marry Rich and who personified her as Stella in his poetry. Simeana is variously identified as Wroth's friend Susan de Vere and her aunt Mary Sidney, mother of Wroth's lover. Lissius represents both Philip Herbert, William's younger brother; and Matthew Lister, with whom Mary Sidney was romantically linked later in her life. Rustic is associated with Robert Wroth, Lady Mary's husband; and with Robert Rich, Penelope's husband. Wynne-Davies has made additional identifications for Arcas, Lacon, Dalina, Silvesta, and Musella's mother.¹⁶

Attention to *Love's Victory* as pastoral tragicomedy has tended to emphasize the ways in which Wroth challenged generic norms. This genre was fairly new at the time,

having been first popularized in Italian by Tasso in the 1570s and taken up in English in the first decade of the seventeenth century by Samuel Daniel and John Fletcher. Barbara Lewalski describes it as drawing on a long pastoral tradition of eclogues, masques, and romances, yet as being highly criticized for violating artistic decorum in its crude mixing of tragedy and comedy (91). When the pastoral mode was applied to this new dramatic genre, the typical result was a five-act play that incorporated Petrarchan imagery and certain stock characters (e.g., a chaste shepherdess); evoked an Arcadia somewhat tarnished by court and city values; and included such devices as off-stage escapes from death and last-minute lovers' reunions (92). Josephine Roberts suggests that pastoral's humbleness allowed female writers easier access to it, enabling them to comment subtly on larger issues ("Deciphering" 163). Wroth's version, in contrast to plays by male practitioners of the genre, is less aggressively sexual and concentrates more closely on its female characters (McLaren 228). According to Lewalski, Wroth furthers "an implicit feminist politics" in what is usually a man's world (89). Roberts concurs, suggesting that Wroth offers a greater range of choices for female behavior than was usually offered in the period ("Deciphering" 173).

Closely related to the critical discussion of the generic interventions made by Wroth is that of the agency she affords her female characters and that she herself exhibits as an author. A number of critics remark the greater freedom of choice and larger scope for agency of Wroth's female lovers.¹⁷ Naomi Miller's comments, in particular, are useful for the present study because she stresses Wroth's portrayal of women's greater agency as speakers and suggests further that women's discourse may

have been empowered, rather than squelched, in marriage (3-4, 25). While Gary Waller interprets Wroth's female characters as "disadvantaged in communicating and choosing" because of "an anxiety born of their roles as women," he still sees limited room for female agency, particularly in the character of Silvesta and in the play's emphasis on female friendship (241-43). More recently, Ina Habermann has argued Wroth's "profound skepticism" that women could escape men's slander in their attempts at social agency, but she nevertheless maintains that Wroth's play is "a means of dramatizing women's agency as 'brokers of oral reputation' and their role in securing social cohesion by the responsible ordering and regulating of relationships" (98). Additionally, both Miller and Roberts highlight Wroth's own authorial agency in writing as she did. Miller explores Wroth's authorship, and the authorship of women more generally, as an "alternative venue for 'changing the subject,'" for "claim[ing] positions as speaking subjects with independent existences as well" (143, 4). Similarly, Roberts views Wroth's revision of *Romeo and Juliet*'s ending in the ending of her own play as a means of "defin[ing] her power as author to restructure the lovers' fates" ("Deciphering" 170).

Another aspect of the play that has garnered some critical attention is the likelihood that it was staged in a household setting, either at the Sidney's Penshurst, at Wroth's Enfield estate, or at Sir Edward Dering's country home in Surrenden.¹⁸ These suggestions are based on the provenance of the two surviving manuscripts: the Penshurst manuscript, which has remained in the Sidney family since its composition; and another, formerly owned by Dering, and now at the Huntington Library (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 94-95). The latter, which is in Wroth's hand and bears her corrections, is

incomplete, missing the opening interlude, Venus and Cupid's conversation at the close of act three, and act five's conclusion (Roberts, "Huntington Manuscript" 160). Roberts emphasizes that the Huntington manuscript is clearly not a closet drama because of its use of stage directions, and, in addition, was exactly "the type of well-crafted pastoral" that would have been of keen interest to Dering, who was well known for coordinating and hosting amateur theatricals (163-64). Wynne-Davies agrees, arguing that the Penshurst manuscript likely was transcribed at the time of composition, while the Huntington manuscript was transcribed and emended in the 1620s in preparation for a performance at Dering's estate ("Here is a sport" 63-64n39).

Wroth's known involvement in dramatic circles, including acting in masques in Queen Anne's court, her numerous connections to Ben Jonson, and her references to boy actors in *Urania*, strengthen these conjectures (see 242-43; Bergeron 72-73; Shapiro, "Lady Mary Wroth"). Waller has suggested that Wroth gained a unique understanding of the image of the silent woman by "play[ing] an appropriately decorative and silent part in the margins of the spectacle of court" (236, 234). Although Waller uses this theory to support his argument that *Urania* is a critique of the theatricality of the court and of women's place within it (236-39), this insight might also help to explain the unusually vocal nature of the female characters in *Love's Victory*. In addition, his thinking might allow us to see these fully embodied and fully voiced women as Wroth's pointed response to the silenced women of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and other plays written and performed on the predominately male stage.

The emphasis on female characters is immediately apparent in Wroth's

characterization of mother figures in her play. Venus controls the opening scene at the Temple of Love, offering more than twice the number of lines given her son and providing the phrase from which the play's title is taken. In this scene, as throughout the play, she directs Cupid in his interactions with the lovers, deciding both when the mortals, especially the males, must endure more suffering in the name of love and when they have suffered enough. Although Cupid, in true Anacreontic fashion, seems at times mischievous, he is eager to please, asking her, "Like you this, Mother?" and "Is this not pretty?" (1.4.43, 3.3.1).¹⁹ In many respects, she is a female version of Oberon, with Cupid as her Puck. Venus demands and receives respect, both from her son and from the young lovers. She serves as a distinctly female Egeus, delaying the union of Lissius and Simeana, just as Musella's mother, not unlike Joan Thynne, complicates the Musella-Philisses relationship. While Hermia is forced to look with her father's eyes, Musella, "must / Look as her mother like[s]" (5.5.70). As Habermann and others have noted, this inclusion of the mother figure is "a significant alteration in genre conventions" (97).²⁰ While both figures are initially "harsh and autocratic," as Roberts has described them, they eventually bless the unions chosen by the play's daughters in a resolution scene at Venus's temple that Habermann has cleverly termed a "*dea ex machina*" ("Deciphering" 172; 97). Here, it is revealed that Venus provided the potion that saves Musella and Philisses, and here Musella's mother begs her daughter's forgiveness for attempting to force a marriage to a man she despises. According to Miller, *Love's Victory* "explores the limits of female sovereignty in the face of fatherly authority," ultimately describing "an order prescribed by the feminine with 'love's victory' conceived in terms of the

sovereign matriarchal powers of Venus, and, at long last, Musella's mother as well" (130).

But the play also inscribes a gradual shift from motherly authority to that of the younger female generation, highlighted in the young women's increasing domination of the lovers' games depicted in each act. In act 1, Musella rejects a truth-telling game, and instead the shepherds and shepherdesses substitute a singing game selected by Climeana and purportedly judged by Musella and Philisses, although only she is active in that role. The previous scene has already shown us that Philisses despairs over his love for Musella and that Lissius (who loves Philisses's sister, Simeana) rejects love altogether when he sees the despair to which it has brought his friend. This early game discloses a complex network of love interests by revealing the love interests of the minor characters as well (Climeana loves Lissius, and both Rustic and Lacon love Musella). At the same time, the singing game illustrates both Musella's composure in temporarily disguising her feelings for Philisses, and Philisses's frustrated inability to sing (or to speak) his love for Musella. Thus the play immediately counters common perceptions of limited female discursive agency portrayed on the male stage by suggesting the adeptness and control possible for the female speaker and, additionally, by offering an image of virtuous rather than devious female dissimulation.

We also get the first hint that Musella has a prior bond to Rustic. When he says, "I will sing of thee," she responds, "Sorry I am I should be your subject be [sic]" (1.3.53-54).²¹ Like Hermia, betrothed to Demetrius when she prefers Lysander, Musella's affections are placed elsewhere. But the course that Musella pursues is a less

direct, although ultimately more successful, attack on patriarchy, ironically enforced by the mother. Miller comments that Musella here “claim[s] a subject of her own to counter Rustic’s tale-telling” (166). Although Musella delays immediate action on her own desires, she nevertheless begins to assert her discursive potential in the context of the game. A game of fortunes introduced by the villain Arcas in the next act, which reveals that Musella and Philisses will be lucky in love, perhaps further emboldens Musella to pursue her own course separate from Rustic.

In the third act, several of the shepherdesses, now alone, return to the previously suggested truth-telling game. Swift argues that, because of their growing understanding of themselves, the women are now able to speak the truth, helping the audience to recognize that “conventional romantic love games may force lovers into a dishonesty in which love itself is at risk” (181). Perhaps more important is the sense of female community that allows this free and relatively easy discussion, with Dalina openly confessing her fickleness, Simeana her spurning by Lissius, Phillis her unrequited love for Philisses, and Climeana her new interest in Lissius after her previous lover proves false. Wynne-Davies likens this scene to Anne Clifford’s description of women’s gatherings at Penshurst in August 1617, which Wynne-Davies describes as a “female ‘academy’” or “‘feminine’ safe house” in which women might gather for inspiration and socialization, unencumbered by men (“‘My Seeled Chamber’” 61-62). Unfortunately, the quarrel that develops between Simeana and Climeana over who is entitled to Lissius’s love, reminiscent of that between Hermia and Helena, disrupts the frank exchange of ideas and advice. However, Wroth offers no keen sense that a bosom

friendship has been destroyed, as in Shakespeare's play.

In the riddling game in act 4, which occurs after liaisons have been reached between Lissius and Simeana, and Musella and Philisses, the female characters now have a firm upper hand. Dalina chooses the game and establishes its rules, and Musella, who previously had been reluctant, is the first to speak. Her riddle openly refers to her desire to fly one lover (Rustic) for another (Philisses). Indeed, the game is so clearly dominated by the women that Philisses thinks it necessary to wrest control from them. He teases, "Let them alone, the women still will speak" (4.1.379), and he invites Rustic to help him stop the women's domination. Of course, Rustic lacks the skill to riddle, so Philisses comes out ahead. But the game is broken off abruptly by Musella, who leaves to answer her mother's summons. Her participation frames the game, indicating an increased agency in her interactions with the opposite sex. The mastery of the love games by the women, particularly Dalina, Simeana, and Musella, places them in a stronger position to claim the matches of their choice in the final act.

However, as Miller suggests, their love relationships complicate the female characters' ability to speak freely: "Wroth represents the difficulty of claiming speech as a woman when connection rather than separation from the opposite sex is at issue" (168). Through their increased participation in the love games, through the information and advice that they share amongst themselves, and, at times, through trial and error, the women as a group gradually improve their discursive agency. According to Miller, they "increasingly claim precedence over masculine discourse" throughout the course of the play (169). This is true, however, only insofar as we recognize that Wroth offers a range

of female characters with varying attitudes toward female speech and varying degrees of success in exercising their discursive powers.

Climeana, for instance, is outspoken and direct in her pursuit of Lissius, but she is rejected outright by him for courtship behavior inappropriate to her gender. Startlingly forthright in petitioning Simeana for consent to pursue Lissius, Climeana suggests that her own prompt actions rather than Simeana's pretty words will win her man: "This will not win him. You may talk and hope, / But in Love's passages there is large scope" (3.2.123-24). Unconvinced by Simeana's claim of the more steadfast love, and unswayed by Dalina's caution to play coy, Climeana approaches Lissius forwardly as he enters: "Dear Lissius, my dear Lissius, fly me not; / Let not both scorn and absence be my lot" (3.2.177-78). He tells her plainly that he does not love her, and her persistence raises his ire: "Fie, I do blush for you! A woman woo? / The most unfittest, shameful'st thing to do!" (3.2.187-88). Although the audience knows he loves Simeana, his stated rejection of Climeana is based on her gender-inappropriate wooing behavior. She clearly disagrees, however, and turns the blame upon him: "Indeed, 'tis true, / Since suit is made too hard; relentless you" (3.2.189-90). Climeana chooses to defy gender-based rules of courtship that severely curtail her discursive agency, and, when she is soundly rebuked for doing so, she chooses to retreat: "No more shall my words trouble you, nor I / Ere follow more, if not to see me die" (3.2.193-94). She sounds strangely like Helena breaking troth with Hermia as she runs from her in the woods. Presented as the outsider in the group, so thus perhaps unfamiliar with local courtship rituals, Climeana is nevertheless associated with Arcadia (in an obvious nod to Sidney), where gender roles

in courtship would have been more highly formalized than in Wroth's pastoral setting. As such, this character seems an intentional challenging of prevailing courtship norms, yet one who is perhaps too impolitic in her speech to succeed.

Dalina's conscious disruption of gendered discourse is less problematic because she is not serious in her pursuit of men. For instance, in the game of fortunes in act 2, she interrupts the conventional alteration in participation between males and females by asking Rustic to allow her a turn immediately after Musella's fortune has been read. When Arcas comments pointedly, "A man must follow," she responds ironically, "I'm still too bold," allowing Philisses the next turn instead (2.1.168). In act 3, her initial advice to Simeana and Climeana is to ignore their lovers:

This is the reason men are grown so coy,
 When they perceive we make their smiles our joy;
 Let them alone, and they will seek and sue,
 But yield to them and they'll with scorn pursue. (3.2.145-48)

The implication is clear: men know how dependent upon them women are and, consequently, are incredibly fickle. Habermann reads Dalina's speech here as "criticiz[ing] a male Petrarchan practice of courtship that is not really interested in the other, but in narcissistic self-fashioning" (96). Dalina's own fickleness is perhaps a mirror image of the fickleness she fears in men. In spite of her outspokenness and her general disdain for love, however, Dalina knows how to play the game of love by "the book," a skill which she says "love-struck" Lissius lacks (3.2.168). She tells Simeana and Climeana if they want to be more successful than she herself has been to be more

cautious in love: “Rather than too soon won, be too precise; / Nothing is lost by being careful still, / Nor nothing so soon won as lover’s ill” (3.2.164-66).

But Dalina has promised to mend her fickle ways and take the next man who offers himself, and she soon identifies a man who apparently does not play the same coy love games as those around her. When Rustic refuses to riddle with the others in act 4, Dalina comes to his defense, observing that he is “[a]n honest man, and thrifty, full of care” (4.1.404). Later, impressed by Rustic’s genuine excitement about his wedding to Musella and his hospitality in inviting even his rival Philisses to attend the feast, she remarks, “How well this business doth become this man! / How well he speaks word ‘marriage’” (5.2.14-15). And, a few scenes later, she not so subtly proposes to him, totally overturning the conventions of courtship discourse: “I would I might but name the happy maid / Should be your wife” (5.7.125-26). Rather than taking the first man who offers, as she had claimed she would do, the outspoken Dalina self-selects her mate and successfully wins him. If Rustic is indeed to be associated with Robert Wroth and Robert Rich, as Wynne-Davies believes, this may imply some criticism of Dalina for choosing poorly, but she chooses, nonetheless.

Simeana imbibes Dalina’s criticism of men and demands honesty, rather than coyness or fickleness from Lissius. She tells him, “I will be advised / By my own reason; my love shall no more blind / Me, nor make me believe more than I find” (3.2.224-26). Only when he assures her that his “words” will provide an accurate reflection of his “mind” does she pledge her love to him (3.2.236). A short time later, though, she doubts his honesty, based on Arcas’ exaggeration of Lissius’s intimacy with Climeana and on

Lissius's own previous infidelities. However, Musella convinces her that it was necessary for Lissius to speak privately to Climeana in order to end her hopes for him; consequently, Simeana openly admits her "cursed wrong" and begs Lissius's forgiveness (4.1.295). She takes a similar approach in act 5, urging Musella to be honest with her mother about her hatred for Rustic. Simeana's behavior exhibits the common fear in the early modern period of words as inaccurate reflections, or indeed deliberate misconstructions, of a person's mind. Her attempts to demand honesty from Lissius and to speak honestly herself are an attempt to mend her own flawed relationship, but her encouragements to Musella to confide in her mother perhaps indicate a lingering naiveté in her approach to parental expectations. She says of Musella's mother, "She cannot, nor will, go about to cross / Your liking, so to bring you endless loss" (5.1.9-10).

However, Musella is convinced otherwise, and, with the help of Silvesta, creates a savvy performance, another game if you will, although a deadly serious one, that enables her to enact the subject status she earlier claimed. She confesses her love for Philisses to Silvesta, saying "Sometimes I fain would speak, then straight forbear, / Knowing it most unfit" (3.1.77-78). Silvesta immediately concurs: "Indeed a woman to make love is ill" (3.1.79). Musella's reticence to speak is a function of her obedience to common expectations of female courtship behavior; yet hers is not blind obedience, but instead savvy manipulation within the prevailing norms—a more nuanced and more positive feminine model than typically seen in male-authored drama. With Silvesta's guidance, Musella manages a private interview with Philisses in the forest. Here, she debates whether or not to speak, but instead of speaking when he comes forward, she

repeatedly urges *him* to unburden himself. She says to him, “Speak,” and “Tell me who ‘tis you love” (4.1.52, 64). Her strategy works. He “plainlier speak[s],” confessing his love to her, and only after he gives this verbal assurance does she affirm her love for him (4.1.72). In this way, Musella avoids being viewed as the pursuer in a situation in which doing so dishonors her both culturally and personally (given her prior bond to Rustic), yet still negotiates a possible alternative to her increasingly untenable situation.

The value of words as sacred oaths, as bodily extensions of self, becomes important when Musella’s mother confirms a date for her marriage, forcing her to regret the words she previously gave in promise to Rustic. When Philisses urges her to deny her former vow, she responds by cursing it:

I would I could deny the words I spake,
 When I did Rustic’s marriage offer take;
 Hopeless of you, I gave my ill consent,
 And we contracted were, which I repent.
 The time now curse, my tongue wish out, which gave
 Me to that clown with whom I wed my grave. (5.1.69-74)

Musella here consciously contradicts parental expectation, choosing her own fate in choosing Philisses. She would disfigure herself willingly, cutting out her own tongue, rather than marry the man whom her mother puts forward according to the terms of her father’s legal will, rather than be subject to her father’s willful desire, a fate that, in her thinking, effectively kills *her* will. Her curse carries the force of divorce, of death, of eternal silence. In this way, she suggests that the sacredness of an oath enjoined by

others but contrary to one's own desires is diminished. Having made such a vow, though, legally binding in early modern culture, she takes what seems to her the next logical step. She invites Philisses: "Go with me to the temple and there we / Will bind our lives, or else our lives make free" (5.1.88). She and Philisses agree to sacrifice themselves at the Temple of Venus.

The other major female character, Silvesta, offers an important alternative for women to the potentially deadly one made by Musella: chaste singleness. In addition, Silvesta's presence makes central the virginal female body, the same body that portrayals by male dramatists would silence and erase in marriage. Having been spurned by Philisses, Silvesta has disavowed her allegiance to Venus and taken a vow of chastity to Diana. This character is repeatedly noted as a powerful female figure in recent scholarship on the play. Miller, for example, equates her with the sovereign figures of Venus and Musella's mother, examined above. In addition, Miller remarks specifically on Silvesta's "language of chastity" as "a notable example of empowered female speech," suggesting that she is freer to speak than Musella because Silvesta is not constrained by a Philisses (130-32, 168). McLaren also comments on the structural prominence given Silvesta's ideas (227). For example, Silvesta is the first of the mortal females to be introduced to the audience, in a lengthy soliloquy announcing her change of habit and rejoicing in her "free" state (1.1.115). She sees herself as liberated from the foolishness induced by Cupid's arrows:

I have won Chastity in place of Love.

Now Love's as far from me as never known;

Then basely tied, now *freely* am mine own;
 Slavery and bondage with mourning care
 Were then my living, sighs and tears my fare;
 But all these gone now live I joyfully,
Free, and untouched of thought but Chastity. (1.1.118-24; emphasis
 added)

Unlike Helena, who inverts the Petrarchan slave-mistress trope to comic effect, Silvesta here has been empowered by the rejection of her beloved to craft a new lifestyle, to be her own mistress and to reject love's slavery altogether. And unlike Climeana, who, even after Lissius's painful rejection of her, still believes marriage is a necessity, Silvesta changes not just her robes, but her habits of thinking. Independent of the expected course of betrothal, marriage, and childbearing that defined the early modern woman, she nevertheless finds her single life fulfilling and worthwhile. Silvesta embodies the hidden vestal of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, offering new possibilities for women in love and in other areas of life as well.

This becomes most apparent in the final act, when Silvesta stage manages a complex resolution to the Musella-Philisses plot that enables Musella to bestow her love as she pleases with no tragic effects. When Silvesta overhears that Musella is being forced to marry Rustic, she immediately vows to intervene on Musella's behalf. Her response when Climeana suggests that it is preferable for Musella to marry against her will than to remain single is telling: "It's well you think so, yet methinks you can / Make a clean shift to live without a man!" (5.3.27-28). Silvesta effectively allows Climeana to

espouse the prevailing opinion, to be married off without her consent, while at the same time arguing quite forcefully that some women are perfectly capable of independence from marriage. She illustrates the potential power and freedom of unencumbered female speech.

Her subsequent actions certainly underscore her independence. Unbeknownst to the audience, she obtains a sleeping potion from Venus, “fitter means” for the young lovers to achieve their desires than the drawn dagger that she discovers in Musella’s hand when she follows them to the Temple of Love (5.4.58). Subsequently, when the wedding guests arrive at the temple to see Musella and Philisses dead upon the altar, Silvesta is quick to lay the blame on Musella’s mother, whom she calls “[t]he cause and actor of this cruel blow” (5.5.15). At Simeana’s invitation, she explains to the others how she “hindered that sharp blow” that the young lovers would have struck with their knives, but she could not prevent them from exercising “their wills” (5.5.87-88). The others understand this to mean that the lovers were determined to die, and thus she offered them the fatal drink; only Silvesta knows, at this point, that their “will” to marry has succeeded. Silvesta describes Musella’s release of her bond from Rustic in the same terms in which she had previously described her own state: “She’s happy, yet in death, that she is *free* / From such a worthless creature” (5.5.112-13; emphasis added).

Silvesta’s prominence in the play is thus underscored as she both seeks the potion from Venus and explicates the off-stage action for the others and for the audience. In addition, her view of a chaste love independent from men is in this way underscored at a crucial point in the plot.

In the masque-like final scene, Silvesta is in rapid succession condemned to death for killing the young lovers, pardoned when the Forester agrees to take her place, and fully exonerated when Musella and Philisses rise from the altar on which they had lain. Venus takes full credit for the miracle, calling Silvesta her “instrument ordained” (5.7.71). However, both Musella and Philisses credit Silvesta, not Venus, with sparing their lives and cementing their union. Silvesta, for her part, praises Venus for the outcome, but ends by modestly claiming her own success: “Chaste love relieved you, in chaste love still live, / And each to other, true affections give” (5.7.97-98). In other words, she hopes that their married love is imbued with her chastity, rather than Venus’s passion. Roberts argues effectively that this ending serves as a veiled criticism of Venus and of Musella’s mother because Silvesta “outmaneuver[s]” them both (“Deciphering” 172-73). The previous female generation has failed to exercise its sovereignty in a fashion that improves the lives of its daughters, but their daughters set things right by making their own life choices in spite of their mothers’ shortcomings. Musella’s mother says, “Joy . . . / Shuts up my speech,” and she begs pardon of her daughter for her “fault” in complying unquestioningly with her husband’s will (5.7.77-78). Instead of young love succeeding magically in spite of itself, as in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, or gone tragically wrong, as in *Romeo and Juliet*,²² we have here young love aided by a sympathetic, intelligent, and creative female, who rewrites the potentially tragic plot and effectively manages the stage business so as to effect a comic ending. The vestal present in Shakespeare’s play as a dim memory, a suppressed slip of maternity, is here central to the action and to the happy outcome. She is the author, if you will, of her own chaste

love, and also of Musella's married love. Rather than a womb rich with Oberon's young page, Silvesta's is a figurative womb rich with distinctly female possibilities. The female body in Wroth's play as exemplified by Musella and Silvesta births not additional servants to male masters, but instead a new generation of women with greater freedom of choice relative to marriage and greater discursive agency than their mothers.

***Love's Victory* as a Response to Shakespeare**

I would like to return at this juncture to the likelihood that *Love's Victory* was staged, not merely a closet drama, as women's dramas of this period have been frequently categorized, and also to the idea that Wroth's play is on some deeper level a response to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The similarities in the plots and the recurrent, yet utterly transformed, figure of the vestal argue this latter possibility.²³ Let us for a moment consider women's reactions to such a performance compared to their reactions to representations of women on the male stage. Let us, too, imagine Maria Audley Thynne in that audience.

In discussing Wroth's two mentions of boy actors in *Urania*—both of which, he says, “use the boy actor as a simile to denigrate a woman” without similarly denigrating the player or the illusion he creates—Shapiro suggests a keen awareness of gender on the part of theater audiences of the period (“Lady Mary Wroth” 188). He claims that theatergoers “admired boy actors for their ability to represent femininity and . . . might even be acutely sensitive to nuances of technique precisely *because* they were aware of the gender, if not also of the identity, of the male actor behind the female role” (189). Shapiro argues that Wroth's descriptions imply a “dual consciousness” of reality and

representation on the part of Renaissance theatergoers that is “closer to the surface of the audience’s attention and hence more readily activated” when there is “greater disparity between actor and character,” as there naturally would be in the case of boys playing women (191). He adds, “spectators are encouraged to regard themselves as existing on the same plane of reality as the performers, as responding to the ways in which the latter inhabit and project their assigned roles” (191).

While Shapiro’s discussion is intended to dispel the debate over natural versus formal styles of presentation by actors in the period, he does not answer the (rather obvious) question raised by his work: whether female and male audience members would have differed in their responses to the disparity between the boy actor and the female character he played. Female theatergoers, who arguably felt the disparity more keenly, may at times have responded more viscerally to the reality, even as they admired (or panned) the artistic presentation. Should we concern ourselves only with what the internal dramatic audience of Hermia and Helena think as they watch the death of Thisbe, whose situation is not unlike their own desperate situations were a few hours earlier? Or should we also ask, what must female spectators in the theater audience, including, perhaps, Maria, have thought as they vicariously inhabited the (boy) actors playing Hermia and Helena, who simultaneously and silently recognize themselves in (another male) actor playing Thisbe?

I would argue that *Love’s Victory* is Wroth’s response to that question, a response that consciously models the female’s active role in courtship, a response that celebrates the discursive and dramatic agency of the younger female generation rather

than their mothers' passive acceptance of patriarchal conventions. Silvesta's active presence in *Love's Victory* vividly illustrates Wroth's protest of the disfiguring symptoms of patriarchy, and of women's complicity in it, as exhibited in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—a response as vividly embodied within the play as is Maria Thynne's red lock of hair in her letter to her mother-in-law.

Notes

¹ Evidence indicates that Maria's mother may have colluded in the marriage; however, I would argue that the example is still pertinent as an indication of the emotionally fraught and economically perilous position of young women who married against the advice of either set of parents. The objection of the Thynnes to the marriage certainly complicated the young couple's life together in numerous ways and engendered a bitter and rancorous feud between the two women (see 57-58).

² For speculations on this see, Roberts ("Huntington Manuscript" 163); Lewalski (88); and Wynne-Davies ("Here is a sport" 63-64n39). See also subsequent discussion in this chapter (269-70).

³ See, in particular, Lewalski (92-95); and Wynne-Davies (*Women Writers and Familial Discourse* 91-95). Others who comment on pastoral influences on Wroth's play include Roberts ("Huntington Manuscript" 166-67, 170); Swift (175); McLaren (228); and Habermann (77, 84-85).

⁴ Swift (177); Roberts ("Deciphering Women's Pastoral" 170); and Campbell (116) have noted similarities to Shakespeare's works.

⁵ This dramatic situation anticipates the problematic silence of Isabella at the end of *Measure for Measure*, who, like Hippolyta, has little choice but to acquiesce to her political superior.

⁶ All references are to the Norton edition, edited by Greenblatt et al.

⁷ Similar imagery of men as marble imprinting women's waxen minds is found in *The Rape of Lucrece*, when Lucrece weeps with her maid shortly after being raped by Tarquin (see ll. 1240-46).

⁸ For continental examples with cultural currency in England, see Boccaccio (82-89); and Christine de Pizan (91-95). An English example is Edward More's *A Lytle and bryefe treatyse*, which purports to defend English women in particular (B4-B4v).

⁹ See *OED*, *small*, def. 13a.

¹⁰ Norman Holland offers an astute psychological examination of Hermia's dream. See also Maurice Hunt's discussion of the play's reference to the Philomel myth as an "allusion to the mutilated human voice" (223).

¹¹ See, for example, David Marshall, who questions Helena's unwavering debasement and devotion to Demetrius (558). For an early view that opposes this one, see Shirley Nelson Garner on the potential power in Helena's refusal to play the victim (58).

¹² The homoerotic attraction between Titania and her votaress has been explored by several others: Boehrer sees it as a form of "feminine separatism," with Titania's affection for the Indian page embodying her same-sex attraction to his mother (106, 108); Garner discusses the male characters' attempts to suppress the bond between the two women (49); and Traub suggests that the same pattern present in the Hermia-Helena relationship, in which an original homoerotic attachment between women is upset by a heterosexual reproductive economy, is repeated in this relationship ("(In)Significance" 159).

¹³ Freedman describes this as a willful distortion of Titania's perspective by Oberon, which she links to her contention that, as presented in this play, "all figuration is distortion" (204-06).

¹⁴ Other examinations of Shakespeare's allusion to the Theseus myth include those by Garner, who highlights Theseus's general lack of sympathy for women (52-54); and Freake, whose reading of the play as "a comic version of the [Theseus] story" runs contrary to the others mentioned here (272).

¹⁵ Lull recognizes Hippolyta's skeptical role, yet her reading stresses the concord between Hippolyta and Theseus in the fifth act (247).

¹⁶ See Josephine Roberts ("Huntington Manuscript" 166-67); Cerasano and Wynne-Davies's introduction to the play (*Love's Victory* 94); and Wynne-Davies ("Here is a sport"; *Women Writers and Familial Discourse* 100-02). The tendency to use personal allusion was common in pastoral tragicomedy, beginning with Tasso's *Aminta* (Roberts, "Huntington Manuscript" 166).

¹⁷ See, in particular, Swift (184-88); Lewalski (96, 105); and Roberts ("Deciphering" 173).

¹⁸ Swift suggests Penshurst or Surrenden (173); and Lewalski proposes a private performance at Durrants, Wroth's country estate in Enfield, but acknowledges a lack of evidence for this theory (88).

¹⁹ References to *Love's Victory* are to the edition by Cerasano and Wynne-Davies.

²⁰ Swift also comments on the mother as blocking figure (177-78). McLaren discusses the power of Venus and Musella's mother (96-97); and Roberts remarks the similarities between these two female figures ("Deciphering" 172).

²¹ This line appears to be faulty in this edition of the play.

²² In comparing the ending of *Love's Victory* to that of *Romeo and Juliet*, Campbell claims, "what seems to be more of a plot device in Shakespeare's play becomes a strongly voiced protest in Wroth's" (116).

²³ Another intriguing connection is Silvesta's lover, who is called simply Forester, which provides a tentative link with Oberon, who refers to himself as "forester" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (3.2.391). In addition, Theseus calls for a forester to release his hounds to create sport for his upcoming nuptials with Hippolyta (4.1.100, 105). In both instances, the figure of the forester is used to enclose or control women, as opposed to Wroth's Forester, who is content merely to follow Silvesta's lead.

CHAPTER VII

PERFORMING “GOOD LANGUAGES”: THE CAVENDISH WOMEN’S

DRAMATIC REVISIONS OF MARRIAGE

As young girls, both Jane and Elizabeth Cavendish were encouraged in their literary pursuits by their father William Cavendish, first Duke of Newcastle, in much the same way that he later encouraged their stepmother, Margaret, to write as well. To the younger daughter, Elizabeth, he wrote: “Bess, you must write too, write but what you think / Now you’re a girl, dissemble when you link” (qtd. in Findlay, “She Gave You” 259). Cavendish’s lines were prescient in that Bess indeed did write, collaborating with Jane on a play and a pastoral, in addition to writing numerous prayers and meditations later in life. Less clear is the extent to which she learned to dissemble after her marriage to John Egerton, Lord Brackley.

Among Elizabeth Egerton’s *Loose Papers*, collected, edited, and bound by her husband after her death, is a short prose piece entitled “Considerations Concerning Marriage.”¹ Rather than displaying “a Renaissance woman’s internalization of the patriarchal attitudes of her time,” as Travitsky has claimed (“Down-Home Bacon” 136), I would contend that this brief commentary on marriage seems instead to offer a more progressive view of that institution, predicated to a large degree on mutual companionship, and on shared respect and counsel, not on strict marital hierarchy. Repeatedly emphasizing reciprocity and companionate relations, Egerton advises a wife “not to be in such awe of him [her husband], as a servant of his Master, as not to speake, to contradict the least word he saith, but to have an affection, and to love him, as to a

friend, and so to speake their mind, and opinion freely to him, yet not value him y^e lesse” (79v-80). This is a subtle, yet clear shift of the injunction to relative silence so commonly imposed upon previous generations of English women, pointedly inviting women *not* to be intimidated in speaking their minds to spouses whose judgment they admire and respect. This is not the master-servant relationship that was still common in marriage at the turn of the seventeenth century, but a “happy and blessed friendship” (84).

Similarly, Jane Cavendish Cheyne and the girls’ stepmother, Margaret Lucas Cavendish, professed themselves equally blessed in their marriages. Jane wrote to her brother in 1656, describing her husband’s fond treatment of her: “did I not know my self Married, I should think by what hee writes, that hee was still a woer” (qtd. in Greer 108). And in *A True Relation of My Birth, Breeding, and Life*, Margaret Cavendish writes of her happiness in marriage in spite of her initial fears:

though I did dread Marriage, and shunn’d Mens companies, yet I could not, nor had not the power to refuse him, by reason my Affections were fix’d on him, and he was the onely Person I ever was in love with: Neither was I ashamed to own it, but gloried therein . . . ; . . . my love was honest and honourable, being placed upon Merit, which Affection joy’d at the fame of his Worth, pleas’d with delight in his Wit, proud of the respects he used to me, and triumphing in the affections he profest to me, which affections he hath confirmed to me by a deed of time, seal’d by constancy, and assigned by an unalterable decree of his promise, which

makes me happy in despite of Fortunes frowns. . . . (47)

In addition, Katie Whitaker's recent biography paints a close and intimate relationship between husband and wife (86). All three Cavendish women seem to enjoy marriages in which they are valued and respected, perhaps not as equals in the contemporary feminist sense, but nevertheless as companions rather than subordinates.

Taken with the other first-person writing relative to marriage examined in Chapter II, these comments by Egerton, Cheyne, and Cavendish on marriage are indicative of the more companionate view of marriage that predominated by the mid-seventeenth century and of women's greater freedom to speak openly to their husbands with some expectation that their input will be not only welcomed, but valued. These more progressive values also underpin the Civil War dramas written by the Cavendish women. Written collaboratively about 1645 while Jane Cavendish and the newly married Elizabeth, Lady Brackley, were tending to their Royalist father's affairs during the occupation of their familial home by Parliamentary forces, *The Concealed Fancies* emphasizes a similar mutuality in marriage to that described above. The various female characters experiment with different alternatives to retain control of their female selves, the cousins by attempting to probe the inner masculine recesses of their uncle Calsindow, and Luceny and Tattiney by enclosing themselves briefly as nuns. In the concluding scenes, the main characters utilize performance in the form of a subtly transgressive dissimulation that allows them to retain control of the female self even as it is given away in marriage. Their stepmother's *Convent of Pleasure*, probably written while Margaret Cavendish was in exile with her husband in Antwerp in the 1650s, and

first printed in 1668, uses similar metaphors of the convent and of performance to script a still more clearly revisionist view of marriage. Here, the emphasis on female performance that is associated with Lady Happy's convent is extended to the world of marriage to highlight not only the constructed nature of gender, but the performative nature of marriage itself.

Language and Performativity in *The Concealed Fancies*

The Concealed Fancies is a comedy in which the main plot focuses on the courtship of two young women, Luceny and Tattiney, whose father (Lord Calsindow) and brothers (the Stelloes) are away at war. At one point, the sisters retreat to a convent to escape both the ravages of the war and their importunate suitors, Courtley and Presumption, only to be reunited with them in a masque-like intervention staged by the suitors. Two subplots involve the sisters' three female cousins—Cicelley, Sh, and Is (the full names of the latter two women are never given)—whose castle is under siege and who are courted by the Stelloes brothers; and Lady Tranquillity, whose amorous pursuit of Lord Calsindow is unsuccessful. The play is preserved in only a single manuscript copy, appended to a collection of poems and a pastoral, and perhaps intended for presentation to William Cavendish.² Jane Cavendish, her sister Elizabeth (who had married John Egerton at 15 but was still living with her family), and their younger sister Frances had remained at Welbeck Abbey after their father's deployment with Royalist forces and their mother's subsequent death in April 1643. Welbeck was captured by Parliamentary forces in August 1644, briefly recaptured by Royalists in 1645, and finally surrendered in November 1645.³ Based on internal evidence in the volume's poetry and

on the references to captivity in the play itself, Bennett argues convincingly that the play was written sometime between late 1644 and Welbeck's surrender in late 1645 ("“Now let”" par. 8). The play is often read biographically, with Luceny as Jane, Tattiney as Elizabeth, Calsindow as William Cavendish, and Lady Tranquillity as a rather wicked satire of Margaret Lucas.⁴ Although no direct evidence exists for the play's performance, several scholars comment on the likelihood of its use as a household entertainment.⁵ In addition, Emily Smith has shown that references to the play in Adam Littleton's funeral sermon and elegy for Lady Jane Cavendish Cheyne in 1669 indicate that the play was more commonly known in the local area than its murky performance history and its existence in a single manuscript volume might indicate.

Attitudes toward the play have undergone considerable revision since the play was first published by Nathan Comfort Starr in 1931. Starr dismisses the young authors' effort as "practically without value" with the exception of its "artless revelation of the activities of seventeenth century ladies of fashion, living in the country" (837). Although Nancy Cotton includes the play in her path-breaking work on English women playwrights, she accuses Cavendish and Brackley of being "unable to construct a coherent plot" (39). Germaine Greer is similarly dismissive:

Their literacy is of none too high an order: punctuation is chaotic and spelling indifferent, though at times evocative of the soft burr of their Northern speech (e.g. 'darr' for 'dare'); grammar is not much attended to. The contrast of the elaborate play of wit and ironic social insight with gaucheries of style provides the special character of the work of two

brave young women, who cannot conceal their desperate longing for their father's return or their distrust of the unknown woman he married. (107)

However, Ezell's analysis of the social functions of the manuscript—which she describes as “early feminist free thinking”—and of the play, in particular—which she describes as a “reversal” of *The Taming of the Shrew*'s plot—began a slow, but ongoing recuperation of the play (“‘To Be Your Daughter’” 288, 289).

One critical avenue of investigation regarding *The Concealed Fancies* has centered on its revelations of Royalist politics and on the effects of the Civil War on women. Robin Warren, for instance, focuses on the play's “decidedly royalist leanings” (156). Jane Milling also examines certain aspects of the play's wartime setting, including the context of William Cavendish's political situation during the war and the metaphor of plundering (413, 422-23). Travitsky likewise offers an overview of Cavendish's military career and, in addition, theorizes that he may have suggested that his daughters write the play as a distraction from the dangers of their situation and as a way of helping them to maintain a sense of connection to him during what was surely a stressful time for them (*Subordination* 30-33, 69).⁶ According to Findlay, the play's two settings echo the two family seats of Welbeck Abbey and Bolsover Castle and “recreate different aspects of their [Jane and Elizabeth's] experiences in the Civil War: grief at their father's exile and personal involvement in military attacks by the Parliamentary forces” (“‘She Gave You’” 260).

Another prominent area of critical inquiry concerning *The Concealed Fancies* has been its indebtedness to aristocratic theatrical tradition. Most influential, of course,

were William Cavendish's own theatrical activities, as he is known to have encouraged his children's literary endeavors. Not only was Cavendish a literary patron of Ben Jonson, James Shirley, William Davenant, and Richard Brome, but he was also a writer in his own right (Travitsky, *Subordination* 25). Travitsky stresses that Cavendish's daughters "were exposed to and acquainted with courtly literary culture even as children" (30). Three known masque performances—including two works by Jonson and another by Cavendish himself—occurred at Bolsover Castle in the early 1630s, when Jane would have been not yet in her teens, and Elizabeth not yet ten years of age (Findlay, "'She Gave You'" 260). The play's indebtedness to masque tradition in its use of stage machinery in act 5, scene 2, is thus no surprise (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 129). Milling also notes similarities to William's plays *The Variety* and *Country Captain* (415, 418).

In addition to their father's influence, Cavendish and Brackley were well aware of public stage traditions. Lisa Hopkins identifies references in *The Concealed Fancies* to *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, and Ford's plays, as well as allusions to *The Changeling* and possibly to *The Duchess of Malfi*. Also frequently emphasized are the literary and artistic associations of the family into which Elizabeth had recently married, which included John Donne, Abraham Fraunce, musician Henry Lawes, and John Milton, whose *Comus* was performed by three of the Egerton children, including John, in 1634 (Travitsky, *Subordination* 92). While it is important to keep in mind Alison Findlay's caution against reading the sisters' literary activity as merely a product of male-authored dramatic activity, this rich theatrical and literary environment is

nevertheless an important context for the play (“‘She Gave You’” 260).

The theatricality of *The Concealed Fancies* is closely linked to the critical debate over whether or not the play’s ending affirms patriarchal tradition. Warren, for instance, argues that the characters may speak out rather boldly, but in the end they acquiesce to their father’s wishes without question (166). On the other hand, Findlay emphasizes Cavendish and Brackley’s transformation of the household space into theater and their use of theatricalization as a metaphor for the process of the female’s negotiation of identity and status within the household. She claims that the female characters’ “performances as mistresses, nuns, and dutiful (silent) daughters reproduce the discourse of male-authored texts in ways which destabilize the authority of the originals” (“Playing the ‘Scene Self’” 163). According to Findlay, Luceny and Tattiney “repeatedly rewrite themselves through performance” to the extent that “all identity is imitation” (164). Linguistic skill is an important aspect of this performativity in two respects: it allows the audience to consider arranged marriage “from the perspective of the usually silenced woman” and it is valued more highly within the world of the play than are more traditional forms of feminine self-expression (157; “‘She Gave You’” 266). Milling also notes this aspect of the play, suggesting that Luceny and Tattiney see the art of conversation, like that in the court of Henrietta Maria, as “an emancipatory tool” (420).

This tendency to emphasize conversational freedom is seen immediately in the play’s prologues. The first, apparently spoken by one of the sisters, is addressed to a mixed-gender audience and immediately begs the ladies’ pardon for inverting gender roles: “Ladies, I beseech you blush not to see / That I speak a prologue, being a she” (1-

2).⁷ To the gentlemen, she says, “And now to tell you truth of our new play: It doth become a woman’s wit the very way” (7-8). The second prologue, “Spoken by a woman,” echoes the first and was perhaps spoken by Elizabeth since its character seems to fit a younger sister. As in the first prologue, the playful yoking of women’s speech with truth-telling is readily apparent:

Though a second prologue spoke to our play,
I will speak truth: ‘tis woman all the way;
For you’ll not see a plot in any act
Nor any rigid, high, ignoble fact.
Fearing you’ll censure me now, full of tongue,
It’s not fit that I should speak too long. (13-18)

This short prologue rather boldly mocks common stereotypes of women, including women as outspoken and deceptive, rather than truthful; and women as incapable authors, unable to construct a serious plot or to treat a noble subject. The third prologue, though addressed directly to “your Lordship” and more humble than the other two in begging their father’s favor, still references their powers of speech, prettily entreating him to “like . . . and approve, of what we say” (21). The three prologues thus rather cleverly interweave the notions of women’s speech with the truth of women’s experiences and then countenance these potentially revisionist views with the implied approval of an absent father.

The gender inversions continue in the courtship scenario of the main plot, in which the male suitors are overly conventional in their behavior and plagued with

uncertainties about how to win their mistresses. In the opening scene, Courtley and Presumption discuss the incompatibility of love and marriage, and how difficult their mistresses are to please. Presumption complains that Tattiney “knows her scene-self too well” and will not lessen herself in a show of affection for him (1.1.3-4). Presumption prefers a traditional approach to courtship in which his mistress is bound “to obey” (1.1.73). After marriage, he intends to tame his wife in a manner that clearly echoes Petruccio’s attempts to tame Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*: “I mean to follify her all I can, and let her know that garb, that doth best become her, is most ill-favoured. So she shall neither look, walk, or speak, but I will be her perpetual vexation; then send her into the country, where I will stay with her a month, then tell her my occasion draws me to town” (3.3.10-15). Presumption’s treatment of his mistress, as his name suggests, is viewed as an unwarranted seizure of his mistress’s rights.

Courtley’s attitudes toward courtship and marriage, on the other hand, are fully dependent upon courtly romance conventions, replete with the requisite coy mistress and passionate, chivalrous lover. Courtley offers the standard romance view in which love is antithetical to marriage. As he describes it, the couple might publicly obey societal dictates, but privately defy marital roles. He offers a list of contrasting forms of public and private behavior: his mistress should be “a pretty monkey, yet seem grave”; a wife in public, yet “know no matrimony law” in private; “petulant” with him, yet “stately” with others (1.1.59, 63-64, 66-67). He seems content with a perpetual courtship: “I would not have her think of wife / Nor me as husband to make strife” (1.1.68-69). When Presumption describes his plan to tame Tattiney, Courtley suggests unsuccessfully that

he behave more like her “understanding” father and reiterates his plan to “continue the conversation and friendship of lovers” with Luceny, “without knowing the words of man and wife” (3.3.53, 67-68). Both suitors have a view of marriage and courtship that places them firmly in control and fails to take into account the desires of their potential partners.

Of course, Luceny and Tattiney have a different plan in mind, consciously based on the idea of courtship as performance and highly dependent upon their verbal skills. This is immediately apparent when Luceny asks Tattiney how she “acted” her “scene” when Presumption came courting the previous day (1.4.3). Luceny instructs her sister in a “slight way of carelessness” in her dress and outlines her preferences for Courtley’s manner of speaking to her, desiring more “variety” and less stereotypical courting speech, which she calls “impertinent” and “impossible to answer” (1.4.7). She treats Courtley poorly, she tells Tattiney, because he makes her feel as if she is his “courting-stock to practise with, against he comes to his mistress” (1.4.26). Although she confesses her interest in Courtley, she expresses concern that he is interested merely in her marriage portion, rather than in her. When Tattiney asks her if she will continue to behave with the same “discretion” once she has married, Luceny says, “Why do you think ‘I take thee’ shall alter me?” (1.4.43). Despite the witticism of the pun on *altar*, Luceny makes a serious point. She wants to be Courtley’s mistress, but she wants simultaneously to retain her self in the process. Findlay delineates several meanings of *mistress* in the period, emphasizing its reference to authorship and authority in this particular context of the constructed nature of gender and gender roles in courtship.⁸

According to Findlay, the sisters consciously set out “to educate” their suitors as “suitable marriage partners” (““She Gave You”” 261). In this scene, the elder sister’s education of her suitor takes the form of critiquing or correcting his language. Luceny treats Courtley with wit, practicality, and even bawdiness. In rapid succession, she puns on his “new suit”; interprets his courtly speech literally and argues with its implications (as when he comments on her “sweeter face of innocence”); chides him for his “hypocritical language” and “dissembling romances”; and employs double entendre to undermine his “offer to plunder me of my favours” (1.4.48, 62, 74, 75-76, 95). Her conversation is lively and imaginative, if at times rude, in contrast to Courtley’s clichéd and unimaginative wooing. The scene ends with Luceny offering to “cut my lips off” rather than suffering another of his salutatory kisses (1.4.109).

The power of language to transform and to sustain selfhood within courtship is further stressed in act 2, scene 3. The scene contrasts Corpolant, another wooer for Luceny’s hand, with Courtley, who has just infuriated Luceny by using her name to cheat Corpolant of his money. Like John Daw in *Epicene*, Corpolant values silent women because their silence allows him interpretive freedom: “if you say nothing, I shall then understand you think ‘Aye’, and so you will make me very happy by your neglecting silence” (2.3.66-69). In response, the outspoken Luceny sings a dismissive song to silence him and send him to his cups. This scene also reveals the success of Luceny’s indoctrination of her younger sister into her way of thinking. When Tattiney teases her about Courtley being her “governor” once they marry, Luceny reminds her sister that the Bible says “man and wife should draw equally in a yoke” (2.3.34-37-38).

She clearly fears the traditional wife's downcast look and enforced praises of her husband, which she calls "My destruction" (2.3.47). Instead, she wishes "still to imagine him Courtley and I Mistress Luceny" after their marriage, that is, she wishes them to still be themselves, to be unchanged by their changed marital status (2.3.55-56). Tattiney now echoes her sister's sentiments: "I hope to continue my own. . . . For do you think, sister, the words saying in the church shall make me mind him more than I do now? He is my servant, for I intend to be his mistress" (4.3.108-13). Tattiney not only has imbibed her sister's catechism, but also joined her in wordplay with the pun on *mistress*. A short time later, when Tattiney wonders why their suitors are considered wits when their language does not reflect "such miracles," Luceny reveals the power of words within the wooing strategy in which she has been coaching Tattiney. She says, "Why that's because we have been brought up in the creation of good languages, which will make us ever ourselves" (2.3.141, 142-43). The sisters' language, inherited from their father, is the key to their gendered performance in courtship, as well as the key to maintaining and transforming the self in marriage.

The sister's besieged cousins employ an alternative strategy to gain power in politics and in courtship. Apparently also adept at playing the "scene"—indeed, Sh once "practised Cleopatra" (3.4.13-14)—the cousins attempt an exploration of the other, rather than reinscribing the self, as Luceny and Tattiney attempt to do. The cousins' rifling of Calsindow's cordial box is an attempt to "recreate ourselves with other discourse," as Cicilley says, during the "misery" of their imprisonment at Ballamo—a clear reference to the circumstances of Jane and Elizabeth's imprisonment at Welbeck

Abbey (3.4.24, 23). The mints, plums, and cakes they find provide a brief diversion (and an interesting medicinal compendium),⁹ but do little to unlock their uncle's masculine power for them. However, Sh promises that she will "pick his cabinet locks" and reveal "his magazine of love" (3.4.72-73). Catherine Burroughs has suggested that the cousins' opening of their uncle's cabinet is "a fantasy of Lord Calsindow as the desired initiator of his nieces (who stand in for his daughters)" (27). She describes the interruptions by the maid and by Lady Tranquillity as necessary to preserve the intrigue and highlight the fascination with Calsindow's (and, by extension, Cavendish's) sexual life (28). Yet the cousins' attempt to open Calsindow's cabinet remains unsuccessful, suggesting perhaps that this form of gender performativity, playing the sexualized other, is an unproductive route for young women negotiating courtship.

This subplot provides still starker contrast to the main plot when it is revealed that Luceny and Tattiney have become nuns. Courtley and Presumption presumably learn of their suitors' cloistering in the letter that Presumption receives at the end of act 3, scene 3. The audience remains uninformed until two scenes later, in the discussion between Colonel Free and Corpolant, which occurs immediately after the scene in which the cousins open Calsindow's cordial box, thus heightening the contrast between the cousins' sensual enjoyment of their uncle's sweets and the sisters' chosen deprivation. However, because Luceny and Tattiney's decision comes as an unexpected twist in the plot, their motivations bears some teasing out. Their cousin Colonel Free states that the sisters "are become nuns upon the grief of our [the Royalists'] departure" to raise the siege at the castle of Ballamo (3.5.2-3). Bennett is clearly relying on this internal

commentary when she remarks that the sisters “take refuge in rustic monasticism as a direct reaction to the absence of their exiled father and brothers” (“Defamiliarizing Nostalgia” 102). Findlay also sees their desire to become nuns as a result of the war, commenting “Retreat to the nunnery represents a wish to remain in the family home” (“‘She Gave You’” 262).

However, Free’s remark is at least somewhat suspect when we consider that the internal audience is one of Luceny’s disappointed suitors and Free’s drinking companion, so Free therefore may represent the sisters’ motivation in a way that flatters both Corpolant and himself. Furthermore, examining the scene prior to Luceny and Tattiney’s assumption of nuns’ habits suggests that the retreat of the sisters may have an additional cause. Immediately after the exposition about the siege at Ballamo by Proper and Friendly (two gentlemen ushers attached to the Royalist forces), Luceny and Tattiney enter, addressing “Sadness” and “Grief” respectively in rhymed couplets that pour out their overwhelming emotions. Indeed, Luceny seems to be contemplating suicide as an end to her torment, but is prevented by the masque-like entrance of an angel who counsels the young women to “lend” themselves temporarily to those suffering in the Royalist cause in order to achieve happiness with their “blessed friends,” presumably referring to their family members, but also to their suitors (3.2.16, 20).¹⁰ The sisters’ grief, though offering a jarring contrast from the audience’s last view of them, is in keeping with the play’s wartime setting and seems in and of itself perhaps a sufficient explanation for their decision to enter a nunnery. But the angel’s oblique reference to retreat as a way to ensure happiness in their marital matches furthers the notion that their

difficulties in courtship also contribute to their decision. Furthermore, immediately afterward, the scene reverts to *Presumption's* previously examined explanation to Courtly of his intent to tame his wife in marriage. This sequencing of scenes has two effects: it suggests a courtship-related motivation for the sisters' sequestration; and it creates an implicit comparison between the siege of Ballamo and the siege of the female self that the sisters want to avoid in marriage.

My intent is not to minimize the depiction of the effects of war on the female characters in the play, but to highlight the interconnectedness of the political with the personal in the characters' courtships and marriages. As we saw in Chapter II, the Civil War forced women whose husbands, fathers, and brothers were fighting or exiled into positions of agency that might not otherwise have been available to them: managing not just households, but entire estates; conducting financial and legal business for absent heads of household; and protecting their families' property and holdings from the encroachment of enemy forces as best they could. For example, Jane Cavendish attempted to protect her father's interests at Welbeck during its occupation by Parliamentary forces, hiding the family's plate and later rescuing valuable tapestries and Van Dyck paintings from Welbeck and Bolsover after they had been ransacked. The war also altered the usual cycles of courtship and marriage, sometimes allowing women freedom to negotiate their own matches. More often than not, though, marriages were disrupted or delayed, as in the case of Elizabeth, who did not join her husband until after Welbeck was captured, and Jane, who postponed marriage until her mid-30s because of the difficulty of finding a suitable Royalist match (Humphreys).

Luceny and Tattiney's retreat to the female space of the convent represents more than a retreat from war or the safety of home, then, but connotes instead a safe space to enhance control over their self-representations as females within the marriage market. The convent's function is not strictly religious, but rather performative. It allows the sisters to experiment with other modes of speech and interaction, while insulating them to some degree from a hostile political and social environment. In addition, the adoption of nuns' habits allows the sisters still greater control than they already exerted in their father's absence over the disposition of themselves in marriage. Jane and Elizabeth would have been well acquainted with the monastic tradition on which they draw in these scenes. Findlay tells us that, prior to its dissolution as an abbey, Welbeck was the largest English monastery of the French Premonstratensian or White Canon order ("She Gave You" 262). Although the use of the convent is considerably less developed here than in Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*, it functions similarly in allowing Luceny and Tattiney to exert some measure of control over their own performances of gender.

The scene in which the two nuns receive supplicants is particularly revealing in this regard, exploiting the interconnectedness of their personal and political plights, and exposing the convent as a metaphor for the female body. Four poor, "innocent" souls, two men and two women, seek comfort at the altar tended by the nuns (4.1.1). In an odd gender reversal, the men's complaints regard losses in love and the women's concern political losses due to exile and "plunder" (4.1.19). As if to create further slippage between political and personal deprivations, both the rejection of a love suit and the exile

of friends are described as griefs due to “love” (4.1.4, 10). Findlay comments perceptively on the authors’ regendering by female characters in the formerly male space of Welbeck Abbey, where this scene may have been performed, and also on the whiteness of the nun’s habits worn by Luceny and Tattiney, which links them visually both to Welbeck’s monks and to the white coats of the Royalists (““She Gave You”” 262). In addition to the heightened status granted by their substitution for these powerful male figures, the nuns’ power to pronounce words of comfort and blessing grants them greater discursive authority, perhaps in an attempt to compensate for the loss of control of their household due to the occupation by Parliamentary forces.

Thus, when the girls’ suitors, in a continuation of their previous courtly roles, enter into this world of powerful females, their reception is understandably cool. Courtley’s song about Luceny’s “fair” and “chaste” appearance allows him to name her, to perpetuate his ownership of her bodily image, thus earning her rebuke for “profan[ing] my sacred priesthood” by calling attention to her beauty (4.1.45). His is a “stealing language” that she will not allow to “creep / Into my sacred church” (4.1.48-49). Luceny here expresses a view of self as “sacred church” and of the language of identity as inhering in the self; the other’s language when it intrudes upon the self is a violation of its sanctity. Tattiney, too, protests Presumption’s offer to kneel to her as “a pure just goddess” and criticizes his manner of speaking to her as if her vows were not serious (4.1.64). Clearly, the older sister’s sense of self and of the role of language in preserving the self in the courtship process is more finely honed than Tattiney’s. Nonetheless, performing the role of nuns allows both sisters unprecedented control over

their availability for courtship, placing their suitors in precarious and uncertain positions.

The sisters' final appearance as nuns coincides with both the lifting of the siege and their suitors' new, more creative approach to courtship. In this scene, Luceny and Tattiney, apparently not yet aware of the most recent political developments, revert to their earlier modes of poetic commentary on their sadness and grief. In the process, they articulate two contrasting modes of speech, thus briefly illustrating two possible approaches available to women who opt for a single, religious life. Luceny describes relieving her profound sadness by walking in the gardens, which revives "her tongue to talk" in the form of prayers for her absent friends (5.2.13). Tattiney, on the other hand, describes grieving in silence in her "seeled chamber and dark parlour room" (5.2.22). Tattiney here seems to be broadening her own range of personal possibilities, rather than merely echoing her sister. Both of these modes of speech—one secluded, yet active; the other private and silent—provide additional alternatives to the more public blessings of the poor supplicants in the earlier scene, allowing the sisters additional discursive opportunities for and greater control of their self-performances.

This greater control of female self-performance extends into the final masque scenes and the play's epilogue, allowing the sisters subtly to challenge male authority within marriage even as they acquiesce to the wedded state. As the sisters conclude their meditations on sadness and grief, Courtley and Presumption, disguised as gods, enter as in a masque from above and offer to take the women to see their long-absent father.¹¹ Findlay argues that the parodic nature of the scene undercuts its apparent control by the suitors or, indeed, by Lord Calsindow: "The role of dominant husband as divinely-

appointed head of the family is as artificial as Courtley and Presumption's disguises, a shadow of authority" ("She Gave You" 264). It certainly seems unlikely that Luceny and Tattiney would not be able to recognize their suitors or to recognize whither this "scene" they play is tending. Of particular interest is the ending of the masque, after the introduction of Calsindow and the doffing of the suitors' disguises. Luceny asks, playfully, "Are you god-cheaters?," implying her recognition of the disguised suitors, while Tattiney follows, "Or are we not ourselves?" (5.4.9, 10). Since the two are, in fact, "god-cheaters," this implies that Luceny and Tattiney are still firmly in possession of themselves. Their sudden reversal of their retreat from the evils of war and the fearful loss of self in marriage is partly explained by the reappearance of their father, who no doubt will bestow them in marriage as he sees fit (and, in fact, does so in a subsequent scene). But a subtle change in Courtley and Presumption's courtship tactics may play a role here as well. The suitors' speeches are less courtly or controlling, more straightforward than previously. More importantly, Courtley claims, "Madam, we can create" (5.4.11). The suitors have recognized the performative choices of their mistresses and have entered into courtship in a fresher, less predictable way than previously. This recognition, coupled with the women's increased sense of self-reliance and self-awareness after their performances as nuns, helps to explain their sudden acquiescence to marriage.

The final scene and the play's epilogue then crystallize the resistance that both sisters maintain to traditional views of authority within marriage. As Luceny prepares for her wedding, she tells the maid that if she's expected to marry, she'll merely mimic a

wife:

Why then, a wife in show appear

Though monkey I should dare;

And so upon the marriage day

I'll look as if obey. (5.6.3-6)

Continuing a performance within marriage allows Luceny to maintain her separateness of identity within the role of dutiful wife. Consequently, she tells her brother, "I hope to continue my innocent freedom of Luceny" (5.6.24-25). After her brief respite in the nunnery, in which she was able to perform a role that would allow her to remain unmarried, should she choose, she knows she now must fulfill worldly expectations. Thus she tells the Elder Stellow, "leave me to the world, that is a husband" (5.6.35-36).

In the epilogue, which apparently occurs some time after the weddings, the sisters exchange stories of their contrary behavior with their husbands. Luceny reports her various attempts to resist Courtley's control of her behavior, including dressing herself "contrary to his instruction," refusing to take as a model the "mechanical wife" of one of his friends in town, and offering to pray for him when he attempts to make her cry (16, 40). Her responses to his controlling behavior, particularly her verbal replies that contradict his expectations, are a continuation of the earlier project of educating him as suitor, and now as husband. Given that his behavior closely mimics Presumption's earlier plan to tame his wife, Tattiney is highly amused. She in turn reports that Presumption, on the other hand, cannot determine how to behave toward her: "when I am in company with him he becomes a compound of he-knows-not-what, that is, he doth

not appear my husband; neither is his garb my servant” (68-71). If this play is intended to be autobiographical, as most critics appear to believe, these lines may suggest John Egerton’s uncertainty about how to behave toward Elizabeth, given that they are married but have not yet lived together as man and wife. Findlay suggests that “Elizabeth took the opportunity presented by the performance to discover whether she could esteem John Egerton and respect his judgment” (“Playing” 175).

The Cavendish sister’s subtle, performative revision of marriage is clear: the new wives create the illusion of being dutiful even as they attempt to subvert their husbands’ authority. Findlay explains the importance of performance, of mimicry in this process of achieving greater companionship in marriage: Luceny and Tattiney “want to be able to speak their minds freely as mistresses, and to appear as ‘modest’ wives. The combination of these apparently irreconcilable roles is achieved through the mask of conformity in public and the private assertion of independent will, via witty mimicry” (171). The sisters’ final bawdy jokes at their husbands’ expense—about the “rod of authority” and its alternative, the impotent “marriage clog” (88, 89)—affirm not only the characters’ (and the authors’) witty cleverness, but their shrewdly dissident defense of self. Findlay has described *The Concealed Fancies* as “part of Jane and Elizabeth’s wider project of rewriting the household according to their ‘fancies’” (“‘She Gave You’” 270). I would add that Cavendish and Brackley’s play illustrates how women may employ their performativity, particularly their linguistic skills, to rewrite marriage in such a way as to allow wives to maintain a more independent sense of self.

Homoeroticism and Performative Space in *The Convent of Pleasure*

The sisters' stepmother, Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, was to take this performative revision of marriage, highly dependent on women's verbal and theatrical skills, still further. A young, beautiful, but socially awkward attendant in the court of Henrietta Maria in Paris, Margaret Lucas married William Cavendish, a former general with the Royalist forces and thirty years her senior, soon after he began his self-imposed exile on the continent following his defeat at Marston Moor. The couple lived for a short time in Paris and then removed to Antwerp. During this time, guided in philosophical and scientific studies by William's brilliant mathematician brother, Sir Charles Cavendish, and encouraged in literary pursuits by her writer husband, Margaret, too, began to write. After the couple's return to England in 1660, Cavendish became something of a celebrity, occasioning controversy as well as admiration. For example, on her visit to the Royal Society of London in 1667—the first such visit by any woman—she was criticized by Samuel Pepys for “her dress so antic and her deportment so unordinary” and dismissed as “a mad, conceited, ridiculous woman” (qtd. in Whitaker xiv). The chagrin occasioned by her unconventional behavior and fantastic dress eventually earned her the nickname Mad Madge of Newcastle. Yet her charisma and intelligence impressed many, and, as author of twenty-three volumes, ranging across numerous genres during a literary career of more than two decades, she was appreciated by her contemporary readers for her wit and reason, according to Whitaker.¹²

Like her stepdaughters' critical reputation, Margaret's has also undergone considerable change. Even as her works were being recovered by feminist critics in the

1980s, Cavendish's work was often regarded as disappointing and inferior. For instance, Cotton disparages Cavendish's "lack of education," poor grammar, and lack of revision, citing her plays, in particular, as "the poorest of her works" because of their deficiencies in structure and characterization, in spite of their significance as "early feminist statements" (40, 43). However, the editors of two recent volumes of essays on Cavendish stress current revisions of this apologetic attitude toward her work.

Cottegnies and Weitz ascribe the previous dismissal of Cavendish to the contradictory quality of her writings and stress the often misunderstood self-protective strategies of an ambitious writer, even as she consciously attempted to create herself as a "complete author" by attempting as many genres as possible (7, 10). In turn, Clucas attributes the change in Cavendish's critical reputation to a clearer understanding of the contexts for her apparent "'lack' of order and method" (1).

The most recent thinking on Cavendish's drama has benefitted from the trend toward recuperation of women's drama in general. Gweno Williams has made an urgent call for the inclusion in the dramatic tradition of *The Convent of Pleasure* and other plays written by women between 1550 and 1668 but never performed on the public stage, claiming that historical circumstance rather than any inherent lack of performability kept these plays from being publicly performed (95-99).¹³ Indeed, to prove her point, Williams successfully directed a performance of *The Convent of Pleasure* in 1995 at the University College of Ripon and York St. John (Bowerbank and Mendelson 97). Julie Sanders, too, calls for a revision of our gendered notions of "closet" or "private" spaces (and, hence, so-called "closet" genres) and demands a

“reintegration” of male and female authors in critical approaches to drama and performance (“‘Closet Opened’”; “‘A Woman Write’” 294). Mendelson observes this general critical reversal and dismisses the suggestion that Cavendish’s plays represent the disorderly state of drama during the Interregnum because of her habit of revision and collaboration with her husband. She describes Cavendish as a rule-breaker in every genre she wrote, not least in drama (“Playing Games” 195-99). In addition, much critical attention has turned toward delineating Cavendish’s knowledge of and responsiveness to other dramatists of the period, including Shakespeare, Jonson, James Shirley, and her husband, who, as previously mentioned, wrote masques and several plays, two of which (*The Variety* and *The Country Captain*) had been performed at Blackfriars Theater prior to their marriage and were printed while the couple lived in Antwerp.¹⁴ In addition to the theatrical contexts, Sue Wiseman and others have turned their attention to the familial and political contexts for Cavendish’s work.¹⁵

Much of the critical focus regarding Cavendish’s dramatic output concerns her representations of gender and gender politics, particularly with regard to her heroines’ struggles in courtship and marriage. Mendelson notes an “underlying preoccupation with gender” and remarks on the tendency of Cavendish’s female characters to be “prodigies, not just of their own sex, but of *both* sexes” (208). In *The Convent of Pleasure*, in particular, much of this attention necessarily concerns the effect of marriage on women because of its negative depiction of marriage, yet its conventional comedic ending. The main plot of the play involves Lady Happy, who encloisters herself with about twenty other ladies and their female servants to escape marriage and “to enjoy pleasure” instead

(220).¹⁶ The chief pleasures available to the women consist of the sensuous enjoyment of nature, both outdoors and indoors, as their bedchambers are decked out seasonally, and of frequent dramatic entertainments, in which the women perform both male and female roles. As if all of this was not already somewhat sexually suggestive, the kinds of pleasure available for the women's enjoyment are complicated further when Lady Happy falls in love with the newly arrived Princess. Unbeknownst to Lady Happy until the final act (and for a good portion of the play to a reading audience), the Princess is in fact a Prince, who, once his disguise is revealed, announces his intent to marry Lady Happy, by "force of Arms" if necessary (244). The subplots involve the comic antics of the gentlemen who plot ways to gain access to the convent and to Lady Happy's riches, and the negotiations of Madam Mediator, who provides a link between the outside world and the enclosed convent.

The play is frequently read as a negative comment on marriage and its effect on women's social and political position. For instance, Shaver characterizes the play as a "triple-barrelled salvo against marriage as a bad bargain for women," while Williams calls it a "protofeminist play" because of its distinctly female criticism of marriage ("Agency and Marriage" 188; 100). Many critics who see the play as a comment on women's situations have focused closely on the idea of the utopian female community represented by Lady Happy's convent, often observing a close link between gender and politics. Hero Chalmers, for example, emphasizes the "self-sufficiency" of the convent and sees resonances of this feminized retreat in the Royalists' political position (85, 88). In her insightful examination of St. John's Abbey (the Lucas family home), Welbeck

Abbey (one of the Cavendish family homes), and the convent founded in Chaillot by Henrietta Maria in the 1650s as influences on Cavendish's presentation of the convent, Crawford stresses the importance of former convents both as female coteries and, increasingly after the Reformation, as properties belonging to the English elite. She argues quite convincingly that the play is "an advertisement for Margaret Cavendish's own property rights," which had been made uncertain by her lack of dowry, the financial blows to both families of the Civil War, and the objections of William's sons from his first marriage to any settlement of property on her (178, 183, 199-200). In addition, Erin Lang Bonin includes *The Convent of Pleasure* in a discussion of utopian communities in three of Cavendish's plays, in which she argues that such communities allow the women to temporarily sequester themselves from men in order to gain greater political agency (339-40).¹⁷ Finally, the homoerotic nature of the convent is explored by several scholars, among them Theodora Jankowski, who examines the virginity of the convent as a "queer space" in that it disrupts early modern patriarchal sexual economy, and Valerie Traub, who argues instead that female-female desire like that of Lady Happy and the Princess did not pose a threat unless it interfered with marriage ("Pure Resistance" 220; *Renaissance of Lesbianism* 180-81).

Another area of focus in recent scholarship regarding gender in *The Convent of Pleasure* hinges on concepts of theatrical performance and gender performativity. One strand of such critique examines Cavendish's use of performance as a means of women's empowerment. For instance, Sanders examines the "overtly performative" nature of supposedly "private" spaces in Cavendish's writings, including *The Convent of*

Pleasure, and, indeed, in much writing of the period (“‘Closet Opened’” 133).

Additionally, Tomlinson views performance in Cavendish’s plays as “a metaphor of possibility for women” (274).¹⁸

A related strand of inquiry focuses on the performativity of gender, often relying on Butler’s views of gender as inherently unstable and potentially subversive because of the way in which it is constantly created and recreated through performance. For instance, Bowerbank and Mendelson briefly note the prominence of gender play in their introduction to the play (19). Jankowski’s in-depth exploration of the queer space of *Lady Happy*’s convent emphasizes the destabilization of normative gender identities in the characters’ dramatic role playing there. In fact, she concludes that even the marriage in the play’s final scenes acts as a further destabilizing influence because the late revelation of the Prince’s gender fails to erase the clear lesbian attraction of Lady Happy to the Princess (“Pure Resistance” 237-38). Robin DeRosa’s reading focuses on Cavendish’s “aligning [of] the ‘natural’ with that which is performed, artificial, and constructed by the consciousness of (wo)man” (277). She explores the Princess’s revelation, the behavior of the gallants, and the play-within-a-play as reinforcing an understanding of gender as performative and further describes the confusion between the real and the acted within the play. While viewing the play as an example of queer performativity, Katherine Kellett nevertheless also uses it to call into question distinctions made by Butler between performativity and performance, the latter of which Kellett suggests that Butler sees as more fully intentional (422-23, 439n23). Kellett argues that the performances staged in *Lady Happy*’s convent are performative as well in

that “they reveal the contingent nature of patriarchy, of identity, of bodies themselves” and says that convent life in the play “exposes the arbitrariness of heterosexuality as a construct by constantly questioning its stability” (423).

This interest in exposing the workings of gender and of patriarchy is similar to that seen in *The Concealed Fancies*. Though probably written a decade or more later than Cavendish and Brackley’s play, *The Convent of Pleasure* bears some striking similarities to it, indicating Cavendish’s likely familiarity with her stepdaughters’ work. Most notable are the play’s emphasis on the female’s experience of courtship, the use of the convent as an escape from the pressures of courtship, its stress on the value of dramatic performance for women, and a probing interest in the construction and performativity of gender. Like Cavendish and Brackley’s play, Margaret Cavendish’s also revises normative views of marriage. But *The Convent of Pleasure* goes considerably beyond the sly, subtle challenge to male power within the normative marital relationship of the earlier play by suggesting the possibility of attraction based not on opposing sexes, but on mutual compatibility. Although the female-female couple of Lady Happy and the Princess is replaced in the play’s final act with a heterosexual couple, the sensitivity Cavendish shows to her heroine’s plight, the ambiguity of the play’s ending, and its collaborative authorship of the final scenes all serve to complicate any reading of the play as a straightforward affirmation of heteronormative standards. Cavendish’s play also expands on the sort of role-playing seen in *The Concealed Fancies* by increasing the emphasis on women’s authoring of self in marriage through their speeches and dramatic roles. The end result is a dramatic revision of marriage so

daring as likely to have been squelched were it not for its conventional comedic ending, yet provocative nevertheless.

At the play's outset, Lady Happy, the play's romantic heroine, creates an independent female community in order to escape from her overbearing suitors. In long speeches to Madam Mediator that take on an oratorical quality, Lady Happy explains that the women of the convent will be free to pursue the pleasures that they would be unable to enjoy in an outside world that expects them to endure the torments of marriage. She vehemently criticizes marriage as "greater restraint then a Monastery" and men as "troublers of Women" who "make the Female sex their slaves" (218, 220). Lady Happy's refusal of these conditions—"I will not be so inslaved" (220)—is a speech act as pointed as Elizabeth Cary's historical conversion to Catholicism and as replete with religious connotations. Erna Kelly, for example, recently has examined Cavendish's apparent fascination with Catholicism and with convents as an acknowledgment of the continental religion of her exile. In addition, Crawford sees Cavendish's use of the convent to suggest female community as particularly appropriate because of the association of English country homes with male domination (183). In this regard, then, Lady Happy's reversal of terms in making marriage the cloister, and the cloister a place of freedom is a telling verbal reconstruction.¹⁹ First, her paradoxical rhetoric uses highly gendered terms: marriage is monastic/male, while freedom from it is conventual/female. In this way, Lady Happy is highlighting the limitations placed on women by a patriarchy as unrelenting as the male suitors who repeatedly attempt to breach her convent's walls. Further, her recasting of the convent as a place of pleasure has the effect of sanctifying

the sensual and artistic pleasures in which the women freely engage, including their verbal recreations and recasting of marriage. Siegfried aptly analyzes Lady Happy's initial description of the convent as "a mode of rhetorical cross-dressing in which the usual bachelor arguments against marriage and the intrusiveness of women are turned upside-down" (72). Although in *The Concealed Fancies* the convent functions as a way to dodge the demands of courtship, if only temporarily, its function in this play is more fully and clearly articulated by the main character as a (potentially permanent) means of avoiding marriage and of sanctioning female pursuits.

In addition, this women's retreat has clear homoerotic implications, an element of conventual life clearly lacking in the earlier play, and posing a still greater challenge to normative patriarchal views.²⁰ Lady Happy evokes a community within a lush, womb-like environment, enclosed with walls and filled with intimate gardens and bowers, where women fulfill "every Office and Employment" (223).²¹ Here, the implication is, the encloistered women will be free to pursue whatever intellectual and sensual pleasures they choose and to reassert control over their own bodies. Emphasizing the lack of clarity regarding the possibility of sexual activity within the convent, Jankowski, who, as we have seen, reads the convent as a "queer" community, points specifically to the common sexual connotations of the word *pleasure* ("Pure Resistance" 233-35). Read for its sexual connotations, then, the emphasis on sensual "Appetites" in the rhymed couplets closing act 1 acquires new meaning. The final couplet, in particular, suggests titillation, even orgasm: "*Thus will in Pleasure's Convent I / Live with delight, and with it die*" (221). Further, Lady Happy's long speech to the other ladies describing the

seasonally varied furniture, hangings, and bedding that she anticipates for the women's bedchambers stresses the naturalness of taking pleasure in simple sensual delights, including (the possibly masturbatory) admiring of one's own body in the mirror. This scene clearly emphasizes the tactile sensuality of these pleasures.²² In addition, the homoerotic potential in this speech, particularly its focus on "our Chambers," suggests that Cavendish alludes not only to the women's bedchambers but to their internalized erotic spaces (224).²³ In an effort to avoid the troubles of courtship and marriage, Lady Happy verbally creates a distinctly female erotic space that encloses women, while preserving their sensual and sexual pleasures.

But into this idyllic female space comes an ambiguously gendered Princess. Described by Madam Mediator as "a Princely brave Woman truly, of a Masculine Presence," the Princess apparently fools the convent's residents (226). Although the other men have discarded a plan to steal into the cloister dressed as women because they know they cannot successfully impersonate them, the Princess convincingly produces a "Treble-sound" voice and the "coy, dissembling looks" associated with feminine demeanor (227). The Princess's somewhat ambiguous gender is exploited in the convent's various theatricals, in which Lady Happy consistently takes female roles, while the Princess, like some of the other ladies, dresses "in Masculine-Habits, and act[s] Lovers-Parts" (229).²⁴ Bonin remarks on the Princess's androgynous qualities and the similarity of her play with Lady Happy to heterosexual relationships, but she believes, I think rightly, that maintaining the Princess's disguise until the *dénouement* undercuts the heterosexual emphasis of these scenes (349-50).²⁵ A male playing a female

playing a male, a frequent comic strategy in earlier stage drama, is here parodied (and perhaps intentionally reversed, as I will discuss shortly), for a far more ambiguous, and at times dark, effect. Although Madam Mediator and the reader may see through the Princess's disguise, Lady Happy clearly remains unaware of it. Further, she seems willing to entertain the notion, as she puts it, of a "most Princely Lover, that's a She" (229). She neither questions the Princess's apparently masculine bearing, nor is she bothered at this stage of the play by the gender ambiguity of her princely female friend.

The convent's theatrical productions allow Lady Happy and the Princess to explore and discard conventional gender roles through role-playing and performance, which includes experimentation with language. As noted above, these entertainments draw on conventional modes of dramatic entertainment from both the public stage and the court, but in each case Cavendish makes important interventions that allow for greater agency for women. Her use of the theatrical metaphor consciously dominates two full acts of the play, rather than being confined to occasional verbal references and a brief masque scene as in *The Concealed Fancies*. In the first of these entertainments, Lady Happy shares the convent's highly critical view of marriage with the Princess through use of a play-within-a-play.²⁶ Throughout, the ladies of the convent assume roles that vary wildly in terms of status and that freely represent both genders, creating what Siegfried terms "a veritable pageant of cross-dressing and disguise" (78), and perhaps naturalizing the Princess's previous request to wear male garb. In nine rapidly alternating scenes, the lives of married women are presented as a "*Curse*" because of their total dependence upon husbands who are invariably debauched and degenerate

(233). The low-class wives worry about their husbands' drinking and entertainment of other women (3.2, 3.6); similarly, the upper-class ladies worry about husbands who game and whore (3.4). The gentlewomen, in particular, are depicted as subject to unsolicited lovers, who will "have [them] against [their] will" if they refuse sexual relationships (233). For both groups, marriage is conflated with maternity in the relentless physical burdens of reproduction. The scenes of men's excesses alternate with the excesses of the female body in various stages of childbirth: morning sickness, painful labor, and the death of both mother and child during birth are presented in rapid sequence (see 3.3, 3.5, 3.7, and 3.9). In this way, the hyper-maternalized female body is read against the inconstancy and inattentiveness of the male, who nevertheless controls his wife legally and financially, presenting a damning portrait of marriage that perhaps influences the Princess's commitment to a continued female persona in order to please the Lady Happy.

Gweno Williams examines the ease with which these fast-paced scenes were handled in her production of the play and describes the complex *mise-en-abîme* effect generated as an audience watches the cross-dressed Princess's reaction to the condemnation of men (102-03). What I would like to emphasize in addition is the conscious verbal shaping of the play-within-a-play by a distinctly female imagination. Although we never see advice to the actors (as in *Hamlet*) or a rehearsal (as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), the resulting performance is seamless and keenly effective in conveying to the convent's newest member the women's rationale for retiring from the outside world. The careful alteration of scenes between men's indiscretions and

women's woes makes inescapable the causal connection between the two and bears the clear imprint of a writerly female perspective that we are perhaps meant to see as collaborative. This is perhaps most clear in the epilogue:

*Marriage is a Curse we find,
Especially to Women kind:
From the Cobler's Wife we see,
To Ladies, they unhappie be. (233)*

The epilogue's use of *we* might seem conventional for a play's final appeal to the audience were it not for the sweeping claim being made here for *all* women's unhappiness in marriage. Rather than the usual witty plea for applause, or even for sympathy, the epilogue clearly and unequivocally asserts a controversial argument regarding gender. Although there is no specific evidence suggesting that Lady Happy has authored this play, she nevertheless takes clear ownership of its ideology just as surely as she has authored the convent. When the Princess says she "cannot in conscience approve" of the play because some are indeed happy in marriage, Lady Happy expresses her concern that the Princess will become an "Apostate" in her violation of the convent's central vow to oppose marriage (233). The play-within-a-play thus allows for Lady Happy to author and for her collective to perform a dissenting view of the nature and function of early modern marriage, and, in a move as clever as her reconceptualization of the convent, to normalize that view and marginalize the traditional dominant view.

Although perhaps not entirely convinced of the evils of marriage by this

indoctrination, the Princess, in her desire to remain close to Lady Happy, willingly assumes an active role in the imaginative play of the convent by performing subsequently with her in a pastoral romance and a court masque. In each instance, the Princess dresses in masculine costume, and Lady Happy retains her feminine dress. Here, Cavendish appropriates the language of male heterosexual poetic discourse to suggest a female homoerotic encounter.²⁷ For example, the initial posturing of Lady Happy and the Princess echoes the conventional language of Petrarchan love poetry, with Lady Happy taking the female role of “Mistress” and the Princess the male role of “Servant” (229). As the two perform and discard traditional pastoral and courtly personas in subsequent scenes, both have the opportunity to imaginatively engage the limitations of these conventional views. Jankowski views these scenes as perhaps the “earliest literary example of (proto-) butch-femme role-playing,” while Siegfried stresses both the elasticity of gender roles and the potential comedic effect of the disguises in describing the Princess as “Prince as Princess as Swain” (“Pure Resistance” 237; 80). Traub astutely observes that much of the play’s homoeroticism arises from the combination of the “amorous freedom” associated with the pastoral tradition and the “gender fluidity of transvestism” (*Renaissance* 178-79).

In the pastoral scene, the lovers embrace and kiss, recite verses to one another, and dance about a phallic Maypole. The exchanged verses, while distinctly non-pastoral in tone and scope, nevertheless connect Lady Happy with nature (traditionally feminine) and her disguised lover, somewhat ironically, with rationality (stereotypically male). The ending of their exchange of verses is also notable for the Princess’s use of the

Petrarchan trope of the fusion of the lovers' souls: "We shall agree, for we true Love inherit, / Join as one Body and Soul, or Heav'nly Spirit" (238). Yet even within this somewhat conventional role-playing, the female is accorded a greater than usual degree of agency. For example, while clearly allying the feminine with nature, the Princess goes to great lengths to praise Lady Happy's wit, a quality that "Nature would conceal" (121). Still more daring is Lady Happy's confident proclamation not only of her love for, but also her physical attraction to the Princess: "I can neither deny you my Love nor Person" (237). In fact, it is Lady Happy who first suggests that they are suited for marriage, creating a fine ironic tension with the highly traditional view of marriage in the closing poems for the scene, attributed to William Cavendish.

The courtly masque with Neptune and his sea goddess functions similarly to suggest, yet subtly undermine conventional roles for the lovers. The Princess, as Neptune, evinces interest in his kingdom and his political power, while his sea goddess, Lady Happy, is concerned with her body and her appearance. In contrast to Neptune's palaces—his "Rocks of Stone," perhaps a reference to his testicles—the first image associated with the goddess is of maternal suckling: "Moist vapor from my brest I give, / Which he [the sun] sucks forth" (241, 240).²⁸ The interior spaces she describes, her "Cabinets" of "Oyster-shells," suggest the hidden female spaces of the womb, which is unlocked by the ebb and flow of menses' "Tide" (241). While Neptune concerns himself with the government of his kingdom, his sea goddess dresses herself, like any genteel lady, combing her hair, albeit with "Fishes bone," and using the sea as her mirror (241). Kellett accurately observes that the Princess increasingly exercises "the male language

of property ownership” in this scene (431). But Lady Happy’s sea goddess also provides a firm, but gentle corrective to Neptune’s apparent attempts at male domination. She claims to suckle the sun, a deity superior even to Neptune, and the sun, in turn, warms her. However, when the sun becomes too warm, she draws on her own powers of government:

But when the Sun begins to burn,
I back into my Waters turn,
And dive unto the bottom low:
Then on my head the Waters flow,
In Curled waves and Circles round;
And thus with Waters am I Crown’d. (241)

Lady Happy’s speech seems a veiled attempt to suggest a different kind of government, in which the wife provides substantive nourishment for her husband’s endeavors and also exerts some power independently of him. In spite of her subtle assertion of power, the couple’s intertwined speeches end with Neptune’s claim as “sole Monarch” (242). However, his sovereignty is once again undercut by the concluding song of a sea nymph who, even as she rejoices in Neptune’s love for the sea goddess and professes his subjects’ devotion, like Lady Happy, believes him to be female. This, in combination with the abrupt vanishing of the scene, as in the pastoral romance, suggests the instability of conventional pastoral and courtly gender roles and the potentially transgressive power of female performance.

More important, however, than the theatrical experimentation with gender roles

is Lady Happy's increasingly passionate response to the Princess, verbalized most keenly in brief dialogues and soliloquies between the various entertainments. As Lady Happy's affection for the Princess continues to grow in the relative seclusion of the convent, she explores the issue of friendship for another woman growing into romantic love, thus opening herself to the possibilities of love with a kindred female soul.²⁹ Just before the pastoral scene, for example, she asks herself, "why may not I love a Woman with the same affection I could a Man?" (234). The Princess, in response to their ardent kisses, seems to suggest that female couples may interact as passionately as heterosexual ones: "These my Imbraces though of Femal kind, / May be as fervent as a Masculine mind" (234). Even a reading audience is aware, at this point, that the Princess refers openly to her disguised state, and also more subtly to the gender ambiguity created when Lady Happy unknowingly kisses a man. However, Lady Happy continues to believe she is engaged in passionate kisses and embraces with another woman. At the pastoral's end, Lady Happy confidently announces that she and the Princess will "in a Married life . . . agree" in spite of their apparent status as a same-sex couple (238). When the pastoral suddenly vanishes, suggesting the imperfect nature of its highly romanticized view, both the Princess and Lady Happy are left in anguish, he because he cannot woo Lady Happy as himself, and she because she realizes that her keen desire for another woman will lead her to "disgrace" (239). Lady Happy's longing for the public affirmation of marriage is considerably more problematic than her desire for physical confirmation, although as both Andreadis and Traub point out, femme-femme sexual desire was increasingly vilified toward the end of the century. Clearly, Lady Happy is astute enough to be aware

of the riskiness of her desire according to the world outside the convent walls.

Not until the final act do we begin to see any clear effects of the imaginative play in which the Prince and Lady Happy have engaged. The solidarity between the lovers is tested when Madam Mediator reveals that a man has entered the convent. All of the ladies scatter in fear, leaving the Princess and Lady Happy standing together, united in their affection for and trust of one another. What transpires from that point onward in the play is less clear. Also unclear is the meaning of the dissolution of the female space in which Lady Happy, and presumably the other ladies as well, have been free to explore theatrical and homoerotic pleasures. But comedic convention demands marriage in the end. And the fact that Cavendish's husband, William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, may have written the last two scenes quite possibly contributes to what seems an overly pat comic ending emphasizing heteronormativity at the cost of the homoerotic attraction so sensitively explored in the play's previous acts. Clearly, the printing of the play in its surviving form indicates Margaret's tacit approval of these final scenes, and her habit of burning her manuscripts makes it impossible to trace any revisions of it. Equally clear is that allowing Lady Happy to refuse marriage to the Prince and to remain within the relative sexual freedom of her convent would have been too openly homoerotic a version of the play for Cavendish to publish.³⁰

Nevertheless, the play's ending has continued to remain unpalatable to many. Irene Dash, for instance, complains that in spite of recognizing in the play "a dramatization of the constant pressures that early modern women felt," her students felt angered by its ending (394). Williams, too, acknowledges that audiences may be

dissatisfied by the conventional ending, in which she (not without reason) notes “resonances of rape” (104). It is perhaps just such dissatisfaction with the conservatism of the final scene that has led DeRosa to interpret the marriage of the Prince and Lady Happy as both a parody and an actual marriage, a continuing performance of gender in which the audience is assigned the impossible task of separating the real from the acted (185).

DeRosa’s interpretation allows us to see more clearly the positive benefits implied as a result of the emphasis on performance in the homoerotic female space of the convent. On the one hand, the Prince is now better prepared to empathize with his wife’s point of view as a result of the imaginative gender play through which she has led him. Traub suggests that he has learned from his experience, and DeRosa also notices a shift in his gender identity (*Renaissance* 180; 279). His threat to take Lady Happy by force notwithstanding, the significance of placing Lady Happy on a par with himself by calling her “Sovereigness,” the Prince’s first act after his disguise is revealed, was probably not lost on Cavendish’s contemporaries (243). The final scene also reveals how the Prince’s experiences in the convent may influence his future championing of women when he says he will preserve the convent for “Virgins and Widows” (246). Perhaps more importantly, though, having donned the disguise of a female in order to woo Lady Happy and then having accepted her as his wife in spite of her obvious homoerotic impulses suggest the Prince’s tacit approval of her homoerotic desire and its challenges to the normative understanding of marriage.

On the other hand, Lady Happy’s reaction to the revelation of the Prince’s

disguise and the dissolution of the convent clearly is problematized by a lack of evidence within the text. Several critics remark on her near-total silence in the final scenes as contrasted to her volubility earlier.³¹ While Traub claims that the play's ending shows the bounds of homoeroticism (*Renaissance* 180), I read the ending as more ambiguous. In analyzing Anthony Van Dyck's *Mirtillo Crowning Amarillis*, a painting based on Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido*, Traub asks, "How *hetero* is Amarillis's desire if, in the prehistory of the painting and more explicitly in the play, she has believed this fabulous kisser to be a woman?" (3). I would apply the same logic to Lady Happy's attraction to the Princess. If Lady Happy first believes her own fabulous kisser to be a woman, how hetero is her desire for the Prince? Jankowski argues that the Prince's discovery does not stabilize the ending, but "destabilize[s] the play even more" ("Pure Resistance" 238). Not only does Lady Happy never recant her declaration of marriage as negative for women, as Shaver aptly notes (*Convent* 12), she never recants her obvious physical attraction to her female lover either. This crucial fact unsettles any attempt to impose a reading in which heterosexual union automatically (or fully) trumps homoeroticism. The intense emotional union Lady Happy feels with the Princess is not merely a matter of the Petrarchan convention in which it is couched, but also suggests the heightened erotic similitude that Traub identifies as a chief component of homoerotic discourse (*Renaissance* 338-39). Though perhaps embarrassed by her misinterpretation and possibly relieved to avoid the obvious social difficulties presented by a same-sex attraction, Lady Happy gains a husband who is identical, minus the petticoat, to the sympathetic same-sex soul mate she has previously experienced. What the play

ultimately implies may perhaps be that, for women, emotional attraction is more significant than physical attributes in matters of the heart, a surprising view for the time period. When Mimick teases Lady Happy about the Prince having successfully “imitated a Woman,” her quick response suggests the naturalness, in her view, of gender play and her healthy attitude toward its potential benefits (246).

While *The Convent of Pleasure* might seem to downplay same-sex attraction and to uphold traditional marital values in its ending, its portrayal of gender is, in fact, complicated and enriched by its gender play and homoeroticism. Mimick’s quite silly speech as he prepares his epilogue pokes fun at the vapidness of mindless mimicry, suggesting that the young couple will perform their married roles in new ways. Both Lady Happy and the Prince have been prepared in their performances of gender to see the other, and themselves, differently. The homoerotic theatrical space that opens within the play in the form of Lady Happy’s convent allows the Prince to experiment with aspects of his character traditionally gendered as female, while Lady Happy learns that a male may share some of her own “feminine” traits. Both learn to see similitude rather than difference in the lover and to anticipate what Siegfried describes as “the potential pleasure of a freely expressed sexuality” (82). The imaginative gender play of the young couple bears the potential to renew an outworn institution, diminishing its painful aspects, especially for women, and making it a heightened locus of erotic pleasure for both.

The Convent of Pleasure thus presents not only marriage, but also the gender order on which it is based, as performative. Cavendish’s portrayal of the constructed

nature of gender is keenly insightful for her time, and it provides the basis for her revision of marriage, which goes substantially beyond that of her step-daughters in *The Concealed Fancies* by openly figuring marriage as an attraction less dependent on domination than on mutuality, an attraction vitally dependent upon performance. Whereas Luceny and Tattiney conceal their views of marriage from their husbands, while playfully revealing them to their audience, Lady Happy openly shares her negative views of marriage with the Prince, and he desires her anyway. Through its inventive use of the convent as a performative space, *The Convent of Pleasure* creates a marriage in which the female is more openly equal to the male than the authoritative, if subversive, wife envisioned by Jane and Elizabeth. Rather than merely seeming to assent to her husband's wishes, Margaret's heroine overtly exercises mutual sovereignty and an erotic playfulness in marriage, firmly rooted in her use of language and its performative powers.

Epilogue

*Enter Lady Ann, dresst as a Cabin Boy. She appears most melancholy, then runs to Sir Richard, dresst as a Sailor. All about the Ship are Turkish Pirates. They imbrace and kiss, and hold each other in their Arms.*³²

I would like to return briefly to the idea of the female actor, an idea suggested in the historical incident involving Ann Fanshawe above, integral to both *The Concealed Fancies* and *The Convent of Pleasure*, and implicit throughout much of my discussion of early modern drama. Both plays by the Cavendish women have been interpreted as consciously contrasting the boy actor tradition of the pre-Civil War public stage in their

emphasis on female performance.³³ In her evaluation of Cavendish's drama, Wiseman detects a fusing of two codes of gender: one from private aristocratic theatricals, which allowed female participation but presented the female only as an ideal, and the other from commercial theater, which, of course, relied on boy actors to represent women, often in a less than ideal light. As a result, Wiseman stresses in the dramatic texts written in the Interregnum "the *possibility* of complete gender congruity between part and actor" (168-69). To return specifically to *The Convent of Pleasure*, both Jankowski and Kellett draw attention to the fact that the list of players in the 1668 printing, included at the end of the play, after the Prince's disguise has been revealed, nevertheless lists a Princess, not a Prince ("Pure Resistance" 238; 433).³⁴ Drawing on her knowledge of female actors on the continent and in Henrietta Maria's masques, Cavendish quite intentionally deconstructs the boy actor tradition by presenting her audience with the exact inverse of Shakespeare's cross-dressed heroine—a girl dressed as a boy dressed as a girl.

In Chapters III and IV, I suggested that early modern women may have read the representations of females on the Tudor-Stuart stage differently than did men, that they may have been troubled by the lack of discursive agency afforded to representations of themselves in the theater. Cavendish's characterization of the Princess, particularly if we assume that s/he was intended to be played by a female, serves to redress the reductive portrayal of women's discursive agency on the popular early modern male stage by placing the female at the core of all performance. Rather than imagining their silencing, women theatergoers might be free, finally, to employ more fully than ever before their own "good languages" and, perhaps, even, to imagine themselves acting men's parts.

Notes

¹ Travitsky questions the extent to which Egerton's *Loose Papers* can be viewed as Elizabeth's, citing "changes in tone and content" between these and her earlier writings as well as clear evidence of John Egerton's editorial refinements (*Subordination and Authorship* 5). She ultimately concludes that his "editorializing was intended to 'improve' and 'refine,' to preserve and not to erase, and that he did not altogether alter her intentions" (168). See my previous discussion in Chapter I of Travitsky's contention that women in the period can be understood to exhibit only limited subjectivity (3). See also Chapter II on Egerton's commentary on marriage (61-63).

² Two manuscripts of the sisters' work exist, both in Jane's hand. The one housed at Yale may be Jane's work alone and contains poetry and a pastoral, while the manuscript housed at Oxford adds eight poems and the play under discussion here. Bennett suggests that transcription of both manuscripts may have been begun in the fall of 1643, but suggests that the Yale volume may have been finished prior to Welbeck's surrender to Parliamentary forces in August 1644 ("Now let my language" pars. 7-8). Travitsky raises the possibility that the Yale manuscript was copied more hastily and sent to Cavendish in exile, while the Oxford manuscript, which includes the play, was sent at a later time when it would no longer have been offensive to him because of its portrayal of Lucas (*Subordination* 54).

³ See Cerasano and Wynne-Davies' introduction to the play (127). Other sources offer details regarding William Cavendish's political situation and Welbeck's occupation: see Travitsky (*Subordination* 30-33); Milling (413); and Starr (802-05).

⁴ Robin Warren sides with those who interpret the play as a satire of their father's love interest, suggesting that fear of having their inheritance reduced may have led to the negative attitude toward Lady Tranquillity in the play (159n10). Milling, on the other hand, suggests that Lady Tranquillity is not a satiric image of Lucas, but a flattering version of "the lusty widow and ambitious servant," like that used by their father in *The Variety* (415). Whitaker, who dates the play slightly earlier than does Bennett, thinks it possible that the play was written before William met Margaret and that Lady Tranquillity is thus a projection of their fears regarding their father's courtship and remarriage, but not necessarily a picture of Margaret Lucas (82-82).

⁵ See Cerasano and Wynne-Davies (127); and Findlay ("She Gave You" 260). Travitsky suggests a performance for Charles I's visit to Welbeck in August 1645 (*Subordination* 67).

⁶ Many of Bennett's conclusions in her exploration of the sisters' use of an aristocratic form in *A Pastorall* as a pointed contrast to the tremendous changes occurring during the war also apply to *The Concealed Fancies* ("Defamiliarizing Nostalgia").

⁷ References to *The Concealed Fancies* are to the edition by Cerasano and Wynne-Davies.

⁸ Findlay lists the various meanings in the period as follows: one who is courted; one involved in an illicit sexual liaison; one who is "a female teacher or ruler of servants"; and one who maintains "self-fashioned subjectivity" ("Playing" 155-56).

⁹ Lisa Hopkins sees this scene as an allusion to Beatrice's rifling of Alsemero's closet in *The Changeling*, and both Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, and Hopkins cite the influence of the herbal of Elizabeth Talbot Grey, a family relative, which may have been available to the sisters in manuscript form even though it was not published until 1653. Hopkins also sees a possible familial allusion to the *Duchess of Malfi* in Cicilley's joke about the prospective glass in this scene (Hopkins 402; Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 212n51).

¹⁰ See *OED*, *friend*, def. 4.

¹¹ Findlay suggests that the sisters may have pictured the suitors in the Cupid costumes from *Love's Welcome at Bolsover*, the Jonsonian masque performed at Bolsover Castle in 1634 ("She Gave You" 264).

¹² Whitaker believes that the epithet "Mad Madge" was not granted her until well after the seventeenth century (see 351, 355). Whitaker's biography offers a thorough and even-handed examination of Cavendish's life.

¹³ Peacock concurs that Cavendish's plays have been considered unproducible merely because they were never produced. She further suggests that Pepys's mistaken belief that William Cavendish's 1667 *The Humorous Lovers* was actually written by Margaret indicates the possibility that one of her plays had been considered for production by the Duke's Men (88-89).

¹⁴ See Hulse on William Cavendish's dramatic output. Judith Haber suggests that Cavendish clearly was influenced by the male dramatic tradition of her time but that "she repeatedly opposes it with evocations of the performative, the static, the singular,

the unrelated” (“Passionate Shepherdess” 118). Peacock views her as “an important link” between drama of the 1630s and 1640s, and that of the Restoration (88). Sanders mentions intertextual references in *The Convent of Pleasure* to *Winter’s Tale*; Jonson’s *The Alchemist*, *New Inn*, and masques, especially *Pan’s Anniversary*; Shirley’s *Bird in a Cage*; and, more generally, to Jonsonian and Caroline masque practices (““A Woman Write””; ““Closet Opened”” 132). Williams compares the *mise-en-abîme* of *Convent’s* staging of the play-within-a-play to that of *Hamlet* and *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (103-04). Hero Chalmers discusses relationships to Shirley, William Cavendish’s *The Varietie*, and Walter Montague’s masque *The Shepherd’s Paradise*; the latter connection is also mentioned by Crawford (83-85; 185). Jeanne Addison Roberts and Brandie Siegfried both read Lady Happy’s single-sex retreat as a reversal of that in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (83; 72). Sophie Tomlinson emphasizes the influence on Cavendish of female acting in Henrietta Maria’s court culture in both Oxford and Paris as well as that of William Cavendish’s theatrical talents and connections (275-76). Bennett also argues that at least some of Margaret’s dramas were ideological responses to William’s works (“Happy Families”). In accord with her belief that individual early modern women were limited by individual early modern men, Travitsky emphasizes Margaret’s heavy dependence on her husband’s approval of her work. While I find problematic her tendency to elevate William’s potential censorship and disapproval and to downplay Margaret’s initiative and calculation as an author, this question she offers about Margaret is quite provocative: “What makes her so conscious of the woman question when her husband was so supportive?” (*Subordination* 51).

¹⁵ On political contexts for *The Convent of Pleasure*, see also Chalmers and Crawford.

¹⁶ All references to *The Convent of Pleasure* cite Shaver's edition.

¹⁷ The other plays discussed by Bonin are *The Female Academy* and *Bell in Campo*.

¹⁸ Tomlinson further suggests that Cavendish sees (and distrusts) professional actors as engaging in a sort of “*anti*-self-fashioning, or self-subversion: a deliberate fashioning of self as other” and that this tendency led her to mute the idea of female performance in her early plays (278-79).

¹⁹ Bonin also comments on Cavendish's rhetorical “refashioning” of the convent (348). In addition, Kellett says that the convent's power is derived from “Lady Happy's discursive ability to resignify the patriarchal world that inhibits her” by reframing it (424).

²⁰ Some critical disagreement exists about exactly how threatening femme-femme sexual behavior might have been. Traub, who uses the term *lesbian* anachronistically to describe femme-femme sexuality in the period, views such behavior as non-threatening so long as women did not refuse to marry (181). On the other hand, Harriette Andreadis describes the increasing silencing and covertness of female same-sex literary discourse over the course of the seventeenth century (see especially her Chapter 4), and Jankowski argues that non-reproductive femme-femme sexual behavior was interpreted as a distinct threat to the patriarchal system (“Pure Resistance” 223).

²¹ See Haber's comments on the convent as womb ("Passionate Shepherdess" 121).

²² See Traub's comments on this aspect of the scene (*Renaissance* 179). See also Bonin (349).

²³ Bonin makes a similar observation (349).

²⁴ Both Kellett and Siegfried comment on the cross-dressing of the other ladies in the convent (428; 78).

²⁵ Traub suggests that the audience's lack of awareness of the Princess's disguise is what determines whether the relationship is that of two femmes (*Renaissance* 179). I am more concerned, however, with how Lady Happy interprets the relationship and how her understanding of the relationship impacts the audience.

²⁶ The anti-marriage stance of the play-within-a-play has been frequently noted. See Bonin (347); Williams (102); Tomlinson (286); and Kellett (426).

²⁷ Andreadis makes this observation of Katherine Philips in analyzing her poetry (42).

²⁸ "Stones" in the sense of testicles is documented as early as 1154 and was current in this time period. See *stone*, *OED*, def. 11a.

²⁹ DeRosa describes this effect as a doubling of the female-female relationship in that it displays both female friendship and covert sexual desire (280).

³⁰ On the attribution of the last two scenes to the Duke, see editions of the play by Bowerbank and Mendelson (129); Shaver (238); and Tomlinson (288-89).

³¹ See Bonin (350); Shaver (“Agency and Marriage”189); and Haber (“Passionate Shepherdess” 122).

³² I have borrowed freely from Margaret Cavendish’s stage directions in this recreation of Ann Fanshawe’s disguising in order to remain above board with her husband during the pirate attack, as described in her memoir (127-28).

³³ See, for example, Findlay (““Playing”” 169); and Williams (102).

³⁴ Shaver, however, restores the list of players to its traditional location at the beginning of the play and lists “The Prince” rather than The Princess (217). This creates a substantially different dynamic for the reading audience than in the 1668 edition of the play.

CONCLUSION

“WHY MAY NOT A LADY WRITE A GOOD PLAY?”

In the Introduction to *Bell in Campo*, Margaret Cavendish stages a scene in which three gentlemen discuss whether to attend a play written by a woman. One of the gentlemen is persistent, urging this “new Play” as “native and naturall” in its language and wit (269-70).¹ Another is particularly reticent, complaining “A woman write a Play! Out upon it, out upon it, for it cannot be good,” and opining further “a womans wit is too weak and too conceited to write a Play.” This reluctant fellow finally allows himself to be persuaded, not because he is hopeful of a good play or even because he is willing to give the play an impartial hearing, but merely because he can then claim indulgence to women in general. He says, “I will go with thee, for I am contented to cast away so much time for the sake of the sex.” The third gentleman provides a contrast to this contemptuous attitude toward women and toward women writers. He asks instead, “Why may not a Lady write a good Play?” Like “many a reprobate converted and brought to repentance by hearing a good Sermon,” he concludes, the second gentleman might reform his opinion after seeing the lady’s play and be “brought to confesse that a Lady may have wit” (270).

This introductory scene to *Bell in Campo* is instructive for several reasons. Although, on one level, it perhaps reveals some sensitivity on Cavendish’s part about the quality of her writing and her anxieties about its acceptance, I read this scene’s self-awareness as part of the larger debate about women and their abilities, including their potential skill as thinkers, speakers, and writers. The three gentlemen represent three

possible modes of participation in the early modern debate—unqualified support for women and their work; open-minded consideration; and patent refusal to accept women’s potential. Cavendish seems to push her audience toward thoughtful consideration of women’s merits—not, incidentally, the mark of an insecure writer—by figuratively inviting them to evaluate the play just as these male “spectators” will. These three stances toward women writers seem to me also to reflect the history of their critical reception. Although Cavendish was considerably popular, if somewhat controversial, in her own time, for more than two centuries her work and the work of other women writers was neglected almost totally. As the recovery of early modern women’s writing began in the late twentieth century, the pendulum at times swung too far in the other direction. Only in the last decade or so, are we coming to these texts with the thoughtful, open-minded stance encouraged here by Cavendish and integrating them into the larger dramatic tradition of which they were always a part.

Another way in which this introductory scene is instructive is in its assumption that the play was not only to be read, but to be performed. In previous chapters, I have traced the complex reactions of female spectators to boy actors playing female roles and also suggested the potential for fuller expression of women’s issues and concerns as well as for greater empathy and identification from female spectators when women author and perform (or at least are imagined to perform) such roles. Allow me, then, to briefly consider the representations of the two main characters, Lady Victoria and Madam Jantil, and the potential effects of their performances as suggested by the play’s internal spectators.

Imagine an army of thousands of women who follow their husbands to war, who seize and plunder the garrison which supplies their husbands' Reformation forces, who come to the rescue when the Reformation army falters, and who, in the end, win the war and return in a triumphant procession, demanding better treatment from their husbands as a result. This is the army roused by Lady Victoria's rhetoric in The First Part of *Bell in Campo*. Her lengthy speeches dominate both parts of the play and contribute to the success of the women's endeavor. Unlike the typical male call-to-arms speech—think, for instance, of Henry V's "Once more unto the breach" (3.1.1-34)—Lady Victoria's first rallying cry in this male-female war is considerably more feminine in its imagery and more reasoned in its approach. She carefully lays out for the assembled women their mistreatment by the "Masculine Sex" who have "cast us out of their Companyes," not just in leaving them behind to go to the front, but in leaving them out of the partnership of marriage (118). Thus she leads them in a bid to become "Copartners in their [men's] Governments" (119).

Subsequently, Lady Victoria provides commentary on the laws she has inscribed for the female army as they are read out to the company of women. Most of the rules, it would seem, offer indoctrination into idealized conduct for (male) troops of the period: bear arms, keep watch, preserve the cornfields for food, avoid plundering what you are unable to carry, and so on (121-23). But several instructions are interesting for their gendered implications: lie entrenched so as to avoid "effeminacy"; always be employed in "Masculine action"; while marching, sing of "the heroical actions done in former times by heroical women"; stay away from men who have corrupting influence,

especially “Husbands, Fathers, Brothers, or the like, [as] they are apt to fright them [women] with threats into a slavish obedience” (123-25). Lady Victoria’s policies are clearly intended to masculinize her women, to allow them to compete, and eventually to triumph, in their husbands’ world, proving themselves “every way equal with men” (152).² Yet, rather than being vilified as monstrous for her outspokenness and her masculine characteristics, as Moll Cutpurse was, at the end of the play she arrives in the city in a gilded chariot, elaborately dressed in a coat and buskins, where she is received with all due pomp by the male magistrates and is cheered by her Amazons. Lady Victoria successfully seems to have overturned the stigma attached to woman’s discursive agency.

However, not all the women share in Lady Victoria’s triumph. Some dutifully choose to stay behind, and, of those, some, like Madam Jantil, lose their husbands. Madam Jantil provides a pointed contrast to Lady Victoria’s highly public, outwardly directed speech. Her extensive instructions to her steward regarding Siegneur Valeroso’s elaborate monument in scene 21 of Part One parallel Victoria’s instructions to her troops, but the effect is to entomb Jantil along with her husband. She does not seek equality with her husband as the Amazons do, but rather she sacrifices her life to be his “living Tomb,” subsuming her identity in his (132). Although Madam Jantil may be seen as the submissive wife, and although Cavendish may intend her as a negative example for women—she does after all leave her maid, Nell Careless, a sizeable inheritance to “live a single life” (164)—it is interesting that she does not depict her as relatively silent. Her speech, though restricted to a small audience—is fluid and expressive, despite her

grief. She shows an intimate knowledge of the male-dominated field of Renaissance architecture,³ converses as an equal with Doctor Educature, and easily dictates a detailed legal will to her secretary. I suggest that this, too, is a revision of the common dramatic type of the silent woman—not, in truth, really silent at all, though she might often have been portrayed that way earlier on the professional stage. That William Cavendish apparently wrote *Madam Jantil*'s verses on her assumption of the veil, her meditation on her husband's death, and her dying verses and song provides an interesting glimpse of a collaborative construction of female gender.⁴ *Madam Jantil*'s performance is notable for its depiction of womanly strength and devotion, but it is nevertheless a highly normative view, precisely because of William's romanticized contributions. The somewhat limited discursive agency that *Madam Jantil* is granted in comparison to *Lady Victoria* and that she uses in support of normative patriarchal values is effectively overshadowed by the more ambiguously gendered and more blatantly transgressive representation of the play's heroine, which challenges the status quo and attempts to extend women's influence within marriage.⁵

The play closes with two short, intriguing scenes in which male and female reactions to the two main characters are opposed. First, *Nell Careless* tells *Doll Pacify* (maid to *Madam Passionate*, who rues an overhasty marriage after her husband's death) that, based on the sorrows of both of their mistresses, she would have chosen never to marry even if *Jantil*'s will had not enjoined her to remain single. This clearly suggests that both women's tales are intended as cautionary and perhaps anticipates the reaction that Cavendish expects to this subplot from her female audience. The final brief scene

includes two gentlemen commenting on Lady Victoria's success, presumably two of the same gentlemen who have been providing exposition and commentary throughout the play, and most likely two of the gentlemen from the introductory scene discussed earlier. Here, the conclusion about marriage differs substantially, creating a fine tension and raising a provocative question about the play's attitude toward marriage. The first gentleman cites the Lord General's pride in his wife; the second claims, "never man had so gallant and noble a Lady, nor more virtuous and loving a Wife than the Lord General hath" (169). Some observations regarding this final commentary on Lady Victoria seem pertinent. First, Victoria is presented as a possession—*the Lord General hath* her. This is not surprising, given the ambivalence we already have observed toward marriage in Cavendish's work and the general attitude of male dominance in the period. However, Victoria also is described in the play's final sentence using coordinate structures. When the ordering of elements in the clause is examined, it becomes apparent that she is *first* a lady, and second a wife.

This is a revolutionary view of the married woman, a view nowhere to be found on the professional London stage in the late-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries and in accord with Victoria's general crusade throughout *Bell in Campo*. If these are the same gentlemen from the introduction, then Cavendish is offering a logical conclusion to the earlier dilemma articulated in their argument about the value of women and of women writers. Women should be seen as women first, as men's equals, and only afterward as wives. Women should be valued for their contributions to society, including their ability to write plays and to perform them. Women spectators and readers, who

even in the 1660s probably would have some knowledge of earlier stage drama because of its lasting popularity and influence, almost certainly would notice this subtle, yet important shift toward the portrayal of equal roles within marriage in Cavendish's work, and perhaps applaud it. Certainly, many would applaud the strong female character of Lady Victoria and Cavendish's attempt to "write her self," as Cixous would put it.⁶

A cross-gendered comparison of early modern drama, like the one offered here, offers a much more complete picture of the multiple discourses regarding women and marriage in the period than often has been available. Such an approach allows us to appreciate the ambiguity of men's representations of women as well as to understand the multiple ways in which women responded to those representations, complicating the stereotypical representations of silent woman and shrew that too often have limited our approaches to women's representations in dramatic texts. My examination of women's attitudes toward marriage and toward their speech relative to marriage in their first-person writing in Chapter II reveals the remarkable breadth of historical women's discursive agency in comparison to the somewhat flatter contours of staged representations of women, perhaps as a result of a pervasive male anxiety about women, and particularly about their speech, in the period, as argued by Breitenberg, Fletcher, and others. As I suggest in Chapters III and IV, women may have questioned representations of female characters as performed on the professional stage by boy actors, yet nevertheless selectively appropriated and perhaps performed in everyday life the discursive behaviors displayed in emergent views of women on stage, even when those representations of agency were mere glimpses, often ridiculed or rejected in the world of

the play. In addition, as I claim in Chapters V and VI, the dramatic responses of women writers suggest a keen interest in engaging—from a specifically female perspective—the ongoing dialectic concerning women and women’s language that so preoccupied the male public theater. In the end, this dialectic becomes one between women, too, as writers like Jane, Elizabeth, and Margaret Cavendish offer their varying interpretations of gender, marriage, and women’s discursive agency. To fail to include these female voices as we analyze representations of women in our shared quest to better understand issues of literary and historical significance in early modern England is to silence them yet again.

Notes

¹References to *Bell in Campo* are to the Shaver edition.

² Cavendish's Lady Victoria may have had some historical precedents. See, for instance, discussion and excerpts of letters describing the wartime activities of Ann Cunningham, Ann Dimack, and Henrietta Maria (Bennett, *Bell in Campo* 213-19; "Margaret Cavendish").

³ See Miranda Wilson's interesting analysis of Madam Jantil's use of architecture as a form of power.

⁴ See Part Two, scenes 7, 13, and 19.

⁵ Bennett argues that Cavendish employs contrasts between the various female characters in the play "to examine the nature and effects of different forms of agency" ("Fantastic Realism" 186).

⁶ Rebecca D'Monte sees Cavendish as struggling with Cixous's dictum (121).

WORKS CITED

- Acheson, Katherine O., ed. *The Memoir of 1603 and The Diary of 1616-1619*. By Anne Clifford. Toronto: Broadview, 2007. Print.
- . "'Outrage your face': Anti-Theatricality and Gender in Early Modern Closet Drama by Women." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 6.3 (2001): n. pag. Web. 30 Nov. 2009.
- Altimont, Alan J. "The Meaning of Nedar in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *Notes and Queries* 54.3 (2007): 275-77. *Oxford University Press Journals Current*. Web. 29 Sept. 2009.
- Amussen, Susan Dwyer. *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988. Print.
- Andreadis, Harriette. *Sappho in Early Modern England: Female Same-Sex Literary Erotics, 1550-1714*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001. Print. Chicago Series on Sexuality, History, and Society.
- Arab, Ronda A. "Work, Bodies, and Gender in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*." *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*. Ed. John Pitcher. Vol. 13. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2001. 182-212. Print.
- Aspinall, Dana E. "The Play and the Critics." Aspinall 3-38.
- , ed. *The Taming of the Shrew: Critical Essays*. Ed. Dana E. Aspinall. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Bacon, Jane Cornwallis. *The Private Correspondence of Jane Lady Cornwallis Bacon, 1613-1644*. Ed. Joanna Moody. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2003. Print.

- Baker, Susan. "Chronotope and Repression in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays*. Ed. Dorothea Kehler. New York: Garland, 1998. 345-68. Print.
- Bakhtin, M. M. *Rabelais and His World*. 1965. Trans. H. Iswolsky. 1984. Rpt. in "Carnival Ambivalence." *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov*. Ed. Pam Morris. London: Edward Arnold, 1994. 194-244. Print.
- Barbour, Richmond. "'When I Acted Young Antinous': Boy Actors and the Erotics of Jonsonian Theater." *PMLA* 110.5 (1995): 1006-22. *JSTOR*. Web. 29 April 2009.
- Bartels, Emily C. "Strategies of Submission: Desdemona, the Duchess, and the Assertion of Desire." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 36 (1996): 417-33. *MLA International Bibliography*. 23 Nov. 2009.
- Barton, Anne. Introduction. *Love's Labor's Lost. The Riverside Shakespeare*. Ed. G. Blakemore Evans. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974. 174-78. Print.
- Baston, Jane. "Rehabilitating Moll's Subversion in *The Roaring Girl*." *Studies in English Literature* 37.2 (1997): 317-335. Print.
- Baumlin, Tita French. "'A good (wo)man skilled in speaking': *Ethos*, Self-Fashioning, and Gender in Renaissance England." *Ethos: New Essays in Rhetorical and Critical Theory*. Eds. James S. Baumlin and Tita French Baumlin. Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1994. 229-63. Print.
- . "Petruchio the Sophist and Language as Creation in *The Taming of the Shrew*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 29 (1989): 237-57. *MLA International*

Bibliography. Web. 17 Mar. 2009.

Bean, John. "Comic Structure and the Humanizing of Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*."

The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare. Eds. Carolyn Ruth Swift

Lenz, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1980. 65-

78. Print.

Beer, Gillian. "Representing Women: Re-presenting the Past." *The Feminist Reader:*

Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism. Eds. Catherine Belsey

and Jane Moore. New York: Blackwell, 1989. 77-90. Print.

Beilin, Elaine. "The Making of a Female Hero: Joanna Lumley and Elizabeth Cary."

Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the Renaissance. Princeton: Princeton UP,

1987. 151-76. Print.

Bell, Iona. "Private Lyrics in Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*." *The Literary*

Career and Legacy of Elizabeth Cary, 1613-1680. New York: Palgrave

Macmillan, 2007. 17-34. Print.

Belsey, Catherine. *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance*

Drama. London: Methuen, 1985. Print.

Bennett, Alexandra G. "Defamiliarizing Nostalgia in the Cavendish Interregnum

Pastorall." *In-Between: Essays and Studies in Literary Criticism* 11.1 (2002):

89-106. Print.

---. "Fantastic Realism: Margaret Cavendish and the Possibilities of Drama." Cottagnies

and Weitz 179-94.

---. "Female Performativity in *The Tragedy of Mariam*." *Studies in English Literature*,

1500-1900 40.2 (2000): 293-309. *JSTOR*. 30 Nov. 2009.

---. "Happy Families and Learned Ladies: Margaret Cavendish, William Cavendish, and Their Onstage Academy Debate." *Essays from the Fifth Biennial International Margaret Cavendish Conference*. Eds. Lisa Hopkins, Emma Rees, and Gweno Williams. Spec. issue of *Early Modern Literary Studies* 14 (2004): n. pag. Web. 30 Nov. 2009.

---. "Margaret Cavendish and the Theater of War." *In-Between: Essays and Studies in Literary Criticism* 9.1-2 (2000): 263-73. Print.

---. "'Now let my language speake': The Authorship, Rewriting, and Audience(s) of Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 11.2 (2005): n. pag. Web. 30 Nov. 2009.

---, ed. *Bell in Campo and The Sociable Companions*. Toronto: Broadview, 2002. Print.

Bergeron, David M. "Women as Patrons of English Renaissance Drama." Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, *Readings* 69-80.

Bevington, David, gen. ed. *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*. New York: Norton, 2002. Print.

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *Famous Women*. Trans. Virginia Brown. Cambridge: I Tatti Renaissance Library, 2003. Print.

Boehrer, Bruce. "Economies of Desire in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *Shakespeare Studies* 32 (2004): 99-117. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 29 May 2009.

Bonin, Erin Lang. "Margaret Cavendish's Dramatic Utopias and the Politics of Gender."

Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900 40.2 (2000): 339-54. *JSTOR*. 20 Feb.

2010.

Boose, Lynda E. "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly

Member." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42.2 (1991): 179-213. Print.

---. "The Taming of the Shrew, Good Husbandry, and Enclosure." *Shakespeare Reread:*

The Texts in New Contexts. Ed. Russ McDonald. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994. 193-

225. Print.

Bound, Fay. "Writing the Self? Love and the Letter in England, c. 1660-c. 1760."

Literature & History 11.1 (2002): 1-19. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 2

Dec. 2008.

Bowerbank, Sylvia, and Sara Mendelson., eds. *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish*

Reader. Peterborough: Broadview, 2000. Print.

Brathwait, Richard. *The English Gentlewoman, drawne out to the full Body*. London,

1631. *Early English Books Online*. Web. 14 Aug. 2008.

Breitenberg, Mark. *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England*. Cambridge:

Cambridge UP, 1996. Print.

---. "Anxious Masculinity: Sexual Jealousy in Early Modern England." *Feminist Studies*

19.2 (1993): 377-98. Print.

Briggs, Julia. "Shakespeare and the Disobedient Woman." *Self-Fashioning and*

Metamorphosis in Early Modern English Literature. Eds. Olav Lausund and

Stein Haugom Olsen. Oslo: Novus, 2003. 150-66. Print.

Brown, Pamela Allen. *Better a Shrew than a Sheep: Women, Drama, and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 2003. Print.

---. "Othering Heights: Player Queens and Boy Divas." Translating Female Performance. Renaissance Society of America Annual Convention. Archivio di Stato, Venice. 9 Apr. 2010. Address.

Brown, Pamela Allen and Peter Parolin, eds. *Women Players in England, 1500-1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. Print.

Brown, Steve. "The Boyhood of Shakespeare's Heroines: Notes on Gender Ambiguity in the Sixteenth Century." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 30 (1990): 243-63. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 10 Feb. 2009.

Brown, Sylvia. "The Approbation of Elizabeth Jocelin." *English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700* 9 (2000): 128-64. Print.

---. "'Over Her Dead Body': Feminism, Post-Structuralism, and the Mother's Legacy." *Discontinuities: New Essays on Renaissance Literature and Criticism*. Eds. Viviana Comensoli and Paul Stevens. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998. 3-26. Print.

Bunker, Nancy Mohrlock. "Feminine and Fashionable: Regendering the Iconologies of Mary Frith's 'Notorious Reputation.'" *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 31.2 (2005): 211-57. Print.

Burgess, Irene. "'The Wreck of Order' in Early Modern Women's Drama." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 6.3 (2001): n. pag. Web. 30 Nov. 2009.

Burns, Margie. "The Ending of *The Shrew*." *Shakespeare Studies* 18 (1986): 41-64. Rpt. in Aspinall 84-105.

- Burroughs, Catherine. "'Hymen's Monkey Love': *The Concealed Fancies* and Female Sexual Initiation." *Women, Nations, Households and History*. Ed. Loren Kruger. Spec. issue of *Theatre Journal* 51.1 (1999): 21-31. *JSTOR*. Web. 4 Jan. 2010.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 1990. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- Callaghan, Dympna, "Re-Reading Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam, the Faire Queene of Jewry*." *Women, 'Race', and Writing in the Early Modern Period*. Eds. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker. London: Routledge, 1994. 163-77, 330-35. Rpt. in Raber, *Ashgate Critical Essays* 174-93.
- . *Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Race and Gender on the Renaissance Stage*. London: Routledge, 2000. Print. Accents on Shakespeare.
- ed. *The Duchess of Malfi: John Webster*. Hampshire: Macmillan, 2000. Print. New Casebooks Series.
- Campbell, Julie D. "Love's Victory and *La Mirtilla* in the Canon of Renaissance Tragicomedy: An Examination of the Influence of Salon and Social Debates." *Women's Writing* 4.1 (1997): 103-25. *Informaworld*. Web. 29 May 2009.
- Cary, Elizabeth, Lady Falkland. *Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland: Life and Letters*. Ed. Heather Wolfe. Cambridge: RTM; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001. Print. Renaissance Texts from Manuscript No. 4.
- . *The Tragedy of Mariam, The Fair Queen of Jewry*. Weller and Ferguson 61-176.
- Cary, [Lucy]. *The Lady Falkland: Her Life, by One of Her Daughters*. Weller and Ferguson 183-275.

Cave, Richard. "Visualizing Jonson's Text." Cave, Schafer, and Woolland 31-42.

Cave, Richard, Elizabeth Schafer, and Brian Woolland, eds. *Ben Jonson and Theatre:*

Performance, Practice and Theory. London: Routledge, 1999. Print.

Cavendish, Lady Jane, and Lady Elizabeth Brackley. *The Concealed Fancies*. Cerasano

and Wynne-Davies, *Renaissance Drama* 131-54.

Cavendish, Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle. *Bell in Campo*. Shaver 107-69.

---. *The Convent of Pleasure: A Comedy*. Shaver 217-47.

---. *Female Orations*, From *Orations of Divers Sorts* (1662). Bowerbank and Mendelson 143-47.

---. "Preface to *Orations of Diverse Sorts* (1662)." Bowerbank and Mendelson 86-90.

---. "The Preface to the Reader, *The Worlds Olio* (1655)." Bowerbank and Mendelson 136-42.

---. *Sociable Letters*. Ed. James Fitzmaurice. New York: Garland, 1997. Print.

---. *A True Relation of My Birth, Breeding, and Life* (1656). Bowerbank and Mendelson 41-63.

Cerasano, S.P. and Marion Wynne-Davies, eds. *Readings in Renaissance Women's*

Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance 1594-1998. London: Routledge, 1998. Print.

---. *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. Print.

Chakravorty, Swapan. "Mirth and License: Moll at the Bankside and Moll in

Cheapside." *Society and Politics in the Plays of Thomas Middleton*. Oxford:

- Clarendon, 1996. 86-106. Print.
- Chalmers, Hero. "The Politics of Feminine Retreat in Margaret Cavendish's *The Female Retreat* and *The Convent of Pleasure*." *Women's Writing* 6.1 (1999): 81-94. *Informaworld*. Web. 8 Jan. 2010.
- Chambers, E. K. *The Elizabethan Stage*. 4 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1923. Print.
- Champion, Larry S. *Thomas Dekker and the Traditions of English Drama*. New York: Peter Lang, 1985. Print. American University Studies Series IV: English Language and Literature Vol. 27.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." Trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Signs* 1.4 (1976): 875-93. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 Apr. 2010.
- Clarke, Danielle. "The Tragedy of Mariam and the Politics of Marriage." *Early Modern English Drama: A Critical Companion*. Eds. Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., Patrick Cheney, and Andrew Hadfield. New York: Oxford UP, 2006. 248-59. Print.
- Clifford, Anne. *The Memoir of 1603 and The Diary of 1616-1619*. Ed. Katherine O. Acheson. Toronto: Broadview, 2007. Print.
- Clucas, Stephen, ed. *A Princely Brave Woman: Essays on Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle*. Ed. Clucas. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. Print.
- Comensoli, Viviana. "Play-making, Domestic Conduct, and the Multiple Plot in *The Roaring Girl*." *Studies in English Literature* 27 (1987): 249-66. Print.
- Conway, Anne. *The Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and their Friends, 1642-1684*. Ed. Marjorie Hope Nicholson. Rev. Sarah Hutton. Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1992. Print.

- Cook, Ann Jennalie. "Wooing and Wedding: Shakespeare's Dramatic Distortion of the Customs of His Time." *Proceedings of the Comparative Literature Symposium* 12 (1981): 83-100. Print.
- Corporaal, Marguérite. "'Moor, She Was Chaste, She Loved Thee, Cruel Moor.' *Othello* as a Starting Point for Alternative Dramatic Representations of the Female Voice." *Comitatus* 33 (2002): 99-111. Print.
- . "'Thy Speech eloquent, thy wit quick, thy expressions easy': Rhetoric and Gender in Plays by English Renaissance Women." *Renaissance Forum* 6.2 (2003): n. pag. Web. 30 Nov. 2009.
- . "'To be in one self chest': Women, Language and Genre in Early Modern English Theatre." Walthaus and Corporaal 189-204.
- Cottagnies, Line and Nancy Weitz, eds. *Authorial Conquests: Essays on Genre in the Writings of Margaret Cavendish*. Teaneck: Farleigh Dickinson UP, 2003. Print.
- Cotton, Nancy. "Women Playwrights in England: Renaissance Noblewomen." Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, *Readings* 32-46.
- Crawford, Julie. "Convents and Pleasures: Margaret Cavendish and the Drama of Property." *Renaissance Drama* 32 (2003): 177-223. Print.
- Daniell, David. "The Good Marriage of Katherine and Petruchio." *Shakespeare Survey* 37 (1984): 23-31. Print.
- Dash, Irene G. "Single-Sex Retreats in Two Early Modern Dramas: *Love's Labor's Lost* and *The Convent of Pleasure*." *Teaching Judith Shakespeare*. Eds. Elizabeth H. Hageman and Sara Jayne Steen. Spec. issue of *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47.4

(1996): 387-95. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 Feb. 2010.

Davis, Viola, and Denzel Washington. Interview by George Stephanopoulos. *Good Morning America*. ABC. KVUE, Austin. 16 Apr. 2010. Television.

Daybell, James. *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.

---. "Women's Letters and Letter Writing in England, 1540-1603: An Introduction to the Issues of Authorship and Construction." *Shakespeare Studies* 27 (1999): 161-86. Print.

---, ed. *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*. Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001. Print. Early Modern Literature in History Series.

Dekker, Thomas. *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. Eds. R. L. Smallwood and Stanley Wells. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999. Print. The Revels Plays.

Deloney, Thomas. *The Gentle Craft*. 2nd ed. London, 1637. *Early English Books Online*. Web. 17 Oct. 2007.

De Pizan, Christine. *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards. New York: Quality Paperback, 1992. Print.

DeRosa, Robin. "'What Have I On a Petticoat?': *The Convent of Pleasure* and the Reality of Performance." *In-Between: Essays and Studies in Literary Criticism* 9.1-2 (2000): 275-86. Print.

Desmet, Christy. "Disfiguring Women with Masculine Tropes: A Rhetorical Reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." Kehler 299-329.

---. "'Neither Maid, Widow, nor Wife': Rhetoric of the Woman Controversy in *The*

- Duchess of Malfi.*” In *Another Country: Feminist Perspectives on Renaissance Drama*. Ed. Dorothea Kehler and Susan Baker. Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1991. 71-91. Rpt. in Callaghan 46-60.
- Diamond, Elin. *Unmasking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater*. London: Routledge, 1997. Print.
- DiGangi, Mario. “Asses and Wits: The Homoerotics of Mastery in Satiric Comedy.” *English Literary Renaissance* 25.2 (1995): 179-208. Print.
- D’Monte, Rebecca. “‘Making a Spectacle’: Margaret Cavendish and the Staging of the Self.” *Clucas* 109-26.
- Dolan, Frances E. “‘Gentlemen, I have one thing more to say’: Women on Scaffolds in England, 1563-1680.” *Modern Philology* 92.2 (1994): 157-78. *MLA International Bibliography*. 10 Jan. 2010.
- . Introduction. *The Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts*. Boston and New York: Bedford, 1996. Print.
- . *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture*. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 2005. Print.
- Durant, David N. *Arbella Stuart: A Rival to the Queen*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978. Print.
- Dusinberre, Juliet. “*The Taming of the Shrew*: Women, Acting, and Power.” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 26.1 (1993): 67-84. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 3 Feb. 2009.
- Dutton, Richard, ed. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. New York: St. Martin’s, 1996. 61-

Print. New Casebooks Series.

Eagleton, Terry. "Desire: *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night*." *William Shakespeare*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. 18-34. Print.

Eales, Jacqueline. "Patriarchy, Puritanism and Politics: the Letters of Lady Brilliana Harley (1598-1643)." *Daybell* 143-58.

Eastwood, Adrienne. "Controversy and the Single Woman in *The Maid's Tragedy* and *The Roaring Girl*. *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 58.2 (2004): 7-27. Print.

Eckert, Penelope, and Sally McConnell-Ginet. *Language and Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.

Egerton, Elizabeth Cavendish, Countess of Bridgewater. *True Coppies of certaine Loose Papers left by ye Right noble Elizabeth Countesse of Bridgewater, Collected and Transcribed together here since Her Death, Anno Dm 1663*. British Library MS Egerton 607. *Perdita Manuscripts*. Adam Matthew Digital. Web. 8 Nov. 2008. <<http://www.perditamanuscripts.amdigital.co.uk>>.

Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard, and Wendy Doniger, eds. *Off with Her Head!: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1995. Print.

Elizabeth I, Queen of England. *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*. Eds. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000. Print.

Engle, Lars, ed. *The Duchess of Malfi*. Bevington 1749-54.

Erickson, Amy. *Women and Property in Early Modern England*. New York: Routledge,

1993. Print.

Ezell, Margaret J. M. *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1987. Print.

---. *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. Print.

---. "'To Be Your Daughter in Your Pen': The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 51.4 (1988): 281-96. *JSTOR*. Web. 25 Feb. 2009.

---. "Women and Writing." Pacheco 77-94.

---. *Writing Women's Literary History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993. Print.

Fanshawe, Lady Ann. *The Memoirs of Ann, Lady Fanshawe*. Loftis 89-192.

Farber, Elizabeth, ed. *The Letters of Lady Elizabeth Russell (1540-1609)*. Diss. Columbia U, 1977. *Proquest*. Web. 5 Nov. 2008.

[Fell, Margaret Askew.] *Womens Speaking Justified, Proved and Allowed of by the Scriptures*. London: 1666. *Early English Books Online*. Web. 19 Jan. 2009.

Ferguson, Margaret W. "Allegories of Subjection: Literacy as Equivocation in Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*." *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003. 265-332. Print.

---. "The Spectre of Resistance: *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613)." *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*. Ed. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass. London: Routledge, 1991. 235-50. Rpt. in

Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, *Readings* 182-93.

Ferguson, Margaret, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers, eds. *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987. Print. Women in Culture and Society.

Findlay, Alison. *A Feminist Perspective on Renaissance Drama*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. Print.

---. "Playing the 'Scene Self': Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley's *The Concealed Fancies*." *Enacting Gender on the English Renaissance Stage*. Eds. Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1999.154-76. Print.

---. "'She Gave You the Civility of the House': Household Performance in *The Concealed Fancies*." Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, *Readings* 259-71.

---. "Theatres for Early Modern Women's Drama: From Household to Playhouse." Walthaus and Corporaal 205-23.

Findlay, Alison, Gweno Williams, and Stephanie J. Hodgson-Wright. "'The Play is ready to be Acted': Women and Dramatic Production, 1570-1660." *Women's Writing* 6.1 (1999): 129-48. *Informaworld*. Web. 8 Jan. 2010.

Fineman, Joel. "The Turn of the Shrew." *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*. Ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman. New York: Methuen, 1985. 138-59. Rpt. in *Much Ado About Nothing and The Taming of the Shrew*. Ed. Marion Wynne-Davies. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001. 123-47. Print.

Fitzmaurice, James and Martine Rey. "Letters by Women in England, the French Romance, and Dorothy Osbourne." *The Politics of Gender in Early Modern*

- Europe: Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies* 12 (1987): 149-60. Print.
- Fletcher, Anthony. *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1995. Print.
- Fletcher, John. *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed*. Bevington 1215-96.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Harper, 1976. Print.
- . "Technologies of the Self." *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1988. 16-49. Print.
- Freake, Douglas. "A Comic Version of the Theseus Myth." Kehler 259-74.
- Freedman, Barbara. "Dis/Figuring Power: Censorship and Representation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean Comedy*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991. Rpt. in Kehler 179-215.
- Frye, Susan. "Sewing Connections: Elizabeth Tudor, Mary Stuart, Elizabeth Talbot, and Seventeenth-Century Anonymous Needleworkers." *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. 165-82. Print.
- Garber, Marjorie. "The Logic of the Transvestite: *The Roaring Girl* (1608)." *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*. Eds. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass. New York: Routledge, 1991. 221-34. Print.
- Garner, Shirley Nelson. "A *Midsummer Night's Dream*: 'Jack shall have Jill; / Nought shall go ill.'" *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 9 (1981): 47-63.

MLA International Bibliography. Web. 29 May 2009.

Gilbert, Ruth. "Mingle-Mangle: Masculine Women and Feminine Men." *Early Modern Hermaphrodites: Sex and Other Stories*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002. 92-97. Print.

Girard, René. "Myth and Ritual in Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*. Ed. Josué V. Harari. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979. 189-212. Print.

Gouge, William. *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises*. London, 1622. *Early English Books Online*. Web. 14 Aug. 2008.

Gowing, Laura. *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996. Print. Oxford Studies in Social History.

Graham, Elspeth. "Women's Writing and the Self." *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*. Ed. Helen Wilcox. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 209-33. Print.

Graham, Elspeth, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby, and Helen Wilcox, eds. *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*. London: Routledge, 1989. Print.

Graves, T. S. "Jonson's *Epicoene* and Lady Arabella Stuart." *Modern Philology* 14.9 (1917): 525-30. *JSTOR*. Web. 23 June 2009.

Green, Juana. "Properties of Marriage: Proprietary Conflict and the Calculus of Gender in *Epicoene*." *Staged Properties in Early Modern Drama*. Ed. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. 261-87. Print.

Green, Reina. "'Ears Prejudicate' in *Mariam* and *Duchess of Malfi*." *Studies in English*

- Literature, 1500-1900* 43.2 (2003): 459-74. *Project Muse*. 20 Nov. 2009.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, gen. ed. *The Norton Shakespeare*. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 2008. Print.
- Greer, Germaine, Susan Hastings, Jeslyn Medoff, and Melinda Sansone, eds. *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Women's Verse*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1988. Print.
- Griffiths, Trevor R, ed. Introduction. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. Print. Shakespeare in Production Series.
- Gurr, Andrew. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*. 1987. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print.
- Gutierrez, Nancy. "Valuing *Mariam*: Genre Study and Feminist Analysis." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 10 (1991): 233-51. Rpt. in Raber, *Ashgate Critical Essays* 101-19.
- Haber, Judith. "'My Body Bestow upon My Women': The Space of the Feminine in *The Duchess of Malfi*." *Renaissance Drama* 28 (1997): 133-59. Print.
- . "The Passionate Shepherdess: The Case of Margaret Cavendish." *Desire and Dramatic Form in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 117-30. Print.
- Habermann, Ina. "Femininity between Praise and Slander." *Staging Slander and Gender in Early Modern England*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. 77-98. Print.
- Hackel, Heidi Brayman. *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. Print.

- Halio, Jay. "Nightingales that Roar: The Language of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *Traditions and Innovations: Essays on British Literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1990. 137-49. Print.
- Halkett, Lady Anne. *The Memoirs of Anne, Lady Halkett*. Loftis 1-87.
- Hallahan, Huston D. "Silence, Eloquence, and Chatter in Jonson's *Epicoene*." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 40.2 (1977): 117-27.
- Hannay, Margaret P., Noel J. Kinnamon, and Michael G. Brennan, eds. *Domestic Politics and Family Absence: The Correspondence (1588-1621) of Robert Sidney, First Earl of Leicester, and Barbara Gamage Sidney, Countess of Leicester*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. Print.
- Harley, Lady Brilliana. *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley, Wife of Sir Robert Harley, of Brampton Bryan, Knight of the Bath*. Ed. Thomas Taylor Lewis. London: Camden Society, 1854. Print.
- Hartwig, Joan. "Horses and Women in *The Taming of the Shrew*." *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 45.4 (1982): 285-94. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 Feb. 2009.
- Heffner, Ray L., Jr. "Unifying Symbols in the Comedy of Ben Jonson." *English Stage Comedy*. Ed. W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. *English Institute Essays* 1954. 74-97. Rpt. in *Ben Jonson: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Jonas A. Barish. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963. 133-46. Print.
- Heilman, Robert B. "The *Taming* Untamed, or, The Return of the Shrew." *Modern Language Quarterly* 27.1 (1966): 147-61. Rpt. in Aspinall 45-57.
- Helms, Lorraine. "Roaring Girls and Silent Women: The Politics of Androgyny on the

- Jacobean Stage.” *Women in Theatre*. Ed. James Redmond. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989. 59-73. Print.
- Hendricks, Margo. “A Painter’s Eye: Gender and Middleton and Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl*.” *Women’s Studies* 18 (1990): 191-203. Print.
- Hinds, Hilary. *God’s Englishwomen: Seventeenth-Century Radical Sectarian Writing and Feminist Criticism*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996. Print.
- Hoby, Margaret. *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605*. Ed. Joanna Moody. Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1998. Print.
- Hodgdon, Barbara. “Katherina Bound, or Play(K)ating the Strictures of Everyday Life.” *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1998. Rpt. in Aspinall 351-87.
- Hodgkin, Katharine. “The Diary of Lady Anne Clifford: A Study of Class and Gender in the Seventeenth Century.” *History Workshop Journal* 19 (1985): 148-61. Print.
- Holland, Norman N. “Hermia’s Dream.” *The Annual of Psychoanalysis* 7 (1979): 369-89. Rpt. in Dutton 61-83.
- Holmes, David M. “*The Roaring Girl, or Moll Cutpurse*.” *The Art of Thomas Middleton: A Critical Study*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1970. 100-10. Print.
- Holstun, James. “The Public Spiritedness of Anna Trapnel.” *Ehud’s Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution*. London: Verso, 2000. 257-304. Print.
- Hopkins, Lisa. “Judith Shakespeare’s Reading: Teaching *The Concealed Fancies*.” *Teaching Judith Shakespeare*. Eds. Elizabeth H. Hageman and Sara Jayne Steen. Spec. issue of *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47.4 (1996): 396-406. JSTOR. Web. 04

Jan. 2010.

Howard, Jean E. "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39.4 (1988): 418-40. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 Feb. 2009.

---. "Sex and Social Conflict: The Erotic Politics of *The Roaring Girl*." *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*. Ed. Susan Zimmerman. New York: Routledge, 1992. 170-90. Print.

---. "Women as Spectators, Spectacles, and Paying Customers." Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 81-86.

---, ed. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Greenblatt 159-228.

Hoy, Cyrus. *The Shoemaker's Holiday. Introductions, Notes, and Commentaries to Texts in 'The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker.'* Ed. Fredson Bowers. Vol. I. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980. 7-70. Print.

Hughey, Ruth, ed. *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603-1627*. [Norfolk]: Norfolk Record Society, 1941. Print. Norfolk Record Society Vol. 14.

Hull, Suzanne. *Chaste, Silent, and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640*. San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982. Print.

Hulse, Lynn. "Cavendish, William, First Duke of Newcastle upon Tyne (bap. 1593, d. 1676)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 2004. Web. 22 Mar. 2010.

Humphreys, Jennett. "Cheyne, Lady Jane (1620/21-1669)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Rev. by Sean Kelsey. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004. *Oxford*

Dictionary of National Biography. 2007. Web. 17 Mar. 2010.

- Hunt, Maurice. "The Voices of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 34.2 (1992): 218-38. Print.
- Hutson, Lorna. "The Housewife and the Humanists." *The Usurer's Daughter*. London: Routledge, 1994. Rpt. *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*. Ed. Lorna Hutson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999. 82-105. Print. Oxford Readings in Feminism.
- Ingram, Martin. "Family and Household." *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*. Ed. Arthur F. Kinney. Malden: Blackwell, 2004. 93-108. Print.
- . "'Solding women cuckold or washed': A Crisis in Gender Relations in Early Modern England?" *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England*. Ed. Jennifer Kermode and Garthine Walker. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1994. 48-80. Print.
- Irigaray, Luce. "This Sex Which is Not One." *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*. Ed. Linda Nicholson. New York: Routledge, 1997. 323-29. Print.
- Jankowski, Theodora A. "Defining/Confining the Duchess: Negotiating the Female Body in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*." *Studies in Philology* 87.2 (1990): 221-45. *JSTOR*. 23 Nov. 2009.
- . "Pure Resistance: Queer(y)ing Virginity in William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*." *Shakespeare Studies* 26 (1998): 218-55. Print.
- Jardine, Lisa. "*The Duchess of Malfi*: A Case Study in the Literary Representation of Women." *Teaching the Text*. Eds. Susanne Kappeler and Norman Bryson.

London: Routledge, 1983. 203-17. Print.

---. *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*. Sussex:

Harvester, 1983. Print.

Jocelin, Elizabeth. *The Mothers Legacie, To her vnborn Childe*. London, 1624. *Early*

English Books Online. Web. 24 Apr. 2008.

---. *A Mother's Legacy to Her Unborn Child*. British Library Add. MS 27467. *Perdita*

Manuscripts. Adam Matthew Digital. Web. 24 Jan. 2009.

<<http://www.perditamanuscripts.amdigital.co.uk>>.

Jonson, Ben. *Bartholomew Fair*. Bevington 969-1065.

---. *Epicene, or The Silent Woman*. Bevington 782-860.

---. *Every Man out of His Humour. The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*. Vol. I. Ed. G. A.

Wilkes. Oxford: Clarendon, 1981. 275-411. Print.

Kahn, Coppélia. "The Taming of the Shrew: Shakespeare's Mirror of Marriage." *Modern*

Language Studies 5.1 (1975): 88-102. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 Feb. 2009.

Kalpin, Kathleen Marie. *Charming Tongues: Representations of Women's Speech in*

Early Modern England. Diss., U of California, Davis, 2005. *Proquest*. Web. 21

Feb. 2008.

Kastan, David Scott. "Workshop and/as Playhouse: Comedy and Commerce in *The*

Shoemaker's Holiday." *Studies in Philology* 84.3 (1987): 324-37. Print.

Kegl, Rosemary. "Theaters, Households, and a 'Kind of History' in Elizabeth Cary's

The Tragedy of Mariam." *Enacting Gender on the Early Renaissance Stage*. Ed.

Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1999. 135-53.

Print.

Kehler, Dorothea. "A *Midsummer Night's Dream*: A Bibliographic Survey of the

Criticism." Kehler 3-76.

---, ed. *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays*. New York: Garland, 1998. Print.

Kellett, Katherine R. "Performance, Performativity, and Identity in Margaret

Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*

48.2 (2008): 419-42. *Project Muse*. 20 Feb. 2010.

Kelly, Erna. "Playing with Religion: Convents, Cloisters, Martyrdom, and Vows."

Essays from the Fifth Biennial International Margaret Cavendish Conference.

Eds. Lisa Hopkins, Emma Rees, and Gweno Williams. Spec. issue of *Early*

Modern Literary Studies 14 (2004): n. pag. Web. 15 Feb. 2010.

Kennedy, Gwynne. "Lessons of the 'Schoole of wisdom.'" *Sexuality and Politics in*

Renaissance Drama. Eds. Carole Levin and Karen Robertson. Lewiston: Edwin

Mellen, 1991. 113-36. Print. *Studies in Renaissance Literature* Vol. 10.

Klein, Lisa M. "Your Humble Handmaid: Elizabethan Gifts of Needlework."

Renaissance Quarterly 50 (1997): 459-93. Print.

Korda, Natasha. "Alien Women Workers as 'Players' in Civic Pageants." Translating

Female Performance. Renaissance Society of America Annual Convention.

Archivio di Stato, Venice. 9 Apr. 2010. Address.

---. "Household Kates: Domesticating Commodities in *The Taming of the Shrew*." Much

Ado about Nothing *and The Taming of the Shrew*. Ed. Marion Wynne-Davies.

Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001. 192-225. Print.

Kyd, Thomas. *The Spanish Tragedy*. Greenblatt 8-73.

Laird, David. "'If we offend, it is with our good will': Staging Dissent in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate* 12.1 (2002/2003): 35-51. *Connotations*. Web. 30 May 2009.

Lanier, Douglas. "Masculine Silence: *Epicoene* and Jonsonian Stylistics." *College Literature* 21.2 (1994): 1-18. Print.

Lanyer, Aemilia. "To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie." *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. 1611. *Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney and Aemilia Lanyer: Renaissance Women Poets*. Ed. Danielle Clark. London: Penguin, 2000. 205-10. Print.

Larminie, Vivienne. "Fighting for Family in a Patronage Society: the Epistolary Armoury of Anne Newdigate (1574-1618)." *Daybell* 94-108.

Leigh, Dorothy. *The Mothers Blessing*. London, 1616. *Early English Books Online*. Web. 24 Apr. 2008.

Levine, Laura. "Rape, Repetition, and the Politics of Closure in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*. Eds. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dymphna Callaghan. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 210-28. Print.

Lewalski, Barbara K. "Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory* and Pastoral Tragicomedy." *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England*. Eds. Naomi J. Miller and Gary Waller. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1991. 88-108. Print.

- Lidh, Todd. "John Fletcher's Taming of Shakespeare: The Tamer Tam'd." *Journal of the Wooden O Symposium* 4 (2004): 66-80. Print.
- Lifson, Martha Ronk. "Embodied Morality in *The Duchess of Malfi*." *Pacific Coast Philology* 23.1-2 (1988): 47-59. JSTOR. 23 Nov. 2009.
- Little, Megan D. "The Persuasion of 'These Poor Informal Women': The Problem of Rhetorical Training in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Measure for Measure*." *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 33.1 (2007): 83-108. Print.
- Lodge, Jeffrey Alan. "The Abuse of Power: Gender Roles in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*." *Pleiades* 12.2 (1992): 63-75. Print.
- Loftis, John, ed. *The Memoirs of Anne, Lady Halkett and Ann, Lady Fanshawe*. Oxford: Clarendon. 1979. Print.
- Longfellow, Erica. "Anna Trapnel 'sings of her Lover.'" *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 149-79. Print.
- Luckyj, Christina. "'Great Women of Pleasure': Main Plot and Subplot in *The Duchess of Malfi*." *Studies in English Literature* 27 (1987): 267-83. *MLA International Bibliography*. 23 Nov. 2009.
- . "Historicizing Gender: Mapping Cultural Space in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*." *Approaches to Teaching English Renaissance Drama*. Eds. Karen Bamford and Alexander Leggatt. New York: Modern Language Association, 2002. 134-41. Print.
- . *'A Moving Rhetoric': Gender and Silence in Early Modern England*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002. Print.

- Lull, Janis. "Textual Theory, Literary Interpretation, and the Last Act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." Kehler 241-58.
- Lyons, Charles R. "Silent Women and Shrews: Eroticism and Convention in *Epicoene* and *Measure for Measure*." *Comparative Drama* 23.2 (1989): 123-40. Print.
- Magnusson, Lynne. *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Print.
- . "Widowhood and Linguistic Capital: The Rhetoric and Reception of Anne Bacon's Epistolary Advice." *English Literary Renaissance* 31.1 (2001): 3-33. Print.
- Magro, Maria. "Spiritual Autobiography and Radical Sectarian Women's Discourse: Anna Trapnel and the Bad Girls of the English Revolution." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34.2 (2004): 405-37. Print.
- Manley, Frank. Introduction. *All Fools*. By George Chapman. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1968. Print. Regents Renaissance Drama Series.
- Marshall, David. "Exchanging Visions: Reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *ELH* 49 (1982): 543-75. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 July 2009.
- Maslen, R. W. "Edmund Tilney (circa 1536-1610)." *Sixteenth-Century British Nondramatic Writers, Dictionary of Literary Biography*. 2nd series. Ed. David A. Richardson. Vol. 136. Detroit: Gale, 1994. 326-29. Print.
- Maus, Katharine Eisaman, ed. *Epicene, or The Silent Woman*. Bevington 775-860.
- Mazzio, Carla. "Sins of the Tongue." *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*. Ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio. New York: Routledge, 1997. 53-79. Print.

- Mazzola, Elizabeth. "Who's She When She's at Home?: 'Manifest Housekeepers,' Jealous Queens, and the Artistry of Mary Stuart." *Exemplaria* 15.2 (2003): 385-417. Print.
- McGrath, Lynette. "Elizabeth Cary, the Nomadic Subject: Space and Mobility in the *Life* and *Mariam*." *Subjectivity and Women's Poetry in Early Modern England*. West Chester: U of Pennsylvania P, 2002. 167-208. Print.
- McGuire, Philip C. "Egeus and the Implications of Silence." *Shakespeare and the Sense of Performance: Essays in the Tradition of Performance Criticism in Honor of Bernard Beckerman*. Eds. Marvin Thompson, Ruth Thompson, and Jay Halio. Newark: U of Delaware P; London: Associated UPs, 1989. 103-15. Print.
- . "Hippolyta's Silence and the Poet's Pen." *Speechless Dialect: Shakespeare's Open Silences*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1985. Rpt. in Dutton 139-60.
- McLaren, Margaret Anne. "An Unknown Continent: Lady Mary Wroth's Forgotten Pastoral Drama, 'Loves Victorie.'" *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print*. Eds. Anne Haselkorn and Betty Travitsky. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1990. 276-92. Rpt. in Cerasano and Davies, *Readings* 219-33.
- McManus, Clare. "When Is a Woman Not a Woman?: Or, Jacobean Fantasies of Female Performance (1606-1611)." *Modern Philology: Critical and Historical Studies in Literature, Medieval through Contemporary* 105.3 (2008): 437-74. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 10 Feb. 2009.
- . "Women and English Renaissance Drama: Making and Unmaking 'The All Male Stage.'" *Literature Compass* 4.3 (2007): 784-96. Web. 16 Jul. 2007.

- Mendelson, Sara Heller. "Playing Games with Gender and Genre: The Dramatic Self-Fashioning of Margaret Cavendish." *Cottagnies and Weitz* 195-212.
- . "Stuart Women's Diaries and Occasional Memoirs." *Women in English Society 1500-1800*. Ed. Mary Prior. London: Methuen, 1985. 181-210. Print.
- Mendelson, Sara, and Patricia Crawford. *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1998. Print.
- Menon, Madhavi. *Wanton Words: Rhetoric and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004. Print.
- Merrens, Rebecca. "'Ignoring the Men': Female Speech and Male Anxiety in Cavendish's *The Female Academy* and Jonson's *Epicoene*." *In-Between: Essays and Studies in Literary Criticism* 9.1-2 (2000): 243-60. Print.
- Middleton, Thomas and Thomas Dekker. *The Roaring Girl*. Ed. Paul A. Mulholland. Manchester, UK: Manchester UP, 1987. Print. The Revels Plays.
- Mikesell, Margaret Lael. "'Love Wrought These Miracles': Marriage and Genre in *The Taming of the Shrew*." *Renaissance Drama* 20 (1989): 141-67. Rpt. in Aspinall 106-29.
- Miles, Rosalind. *Ben Jonson: His Craft and Art*. Savage: Barnes and Noble, 1990. Print.
- Miller, Naomi J. *Changing the Subject: Mary Wroth and Figurations of Gender in Early Modern England*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1996. Print.
- Miller, Naomi J., and Gary Waller, eds. "Introduction: Reading as Re-Vision." *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1991. 1-12. Print.

- Milling, Jane. "Siege and Cipher: The Closet Drama of the Cavendish Sisters." *Women's History Review* 6.3 (1997): 411-26. *Informaworld*. Web. 22 Feb. 2010.
- Mintz, Susannah B. "The Specular Self of *Anna Trapnel's Report and Plea*." *Pacific Coast Philology* 35.1(2000): 1-16. Print.
- Mirabelli, Philip. "Silence, Wit, and Wisdom in *The Silent Woman*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 29 (1989): 309-36. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 10 Feb. 2009.
- Moisan, Thomas. "'What's That to You?' or, Facing Facts: Anti-Paternalist Chords and Social Discords in *The Taming of the Shrew*." *Renaissance Drama* 26 (1995): 105-27. Rpt. in Aspinall 255-76.
- Montrose, Louis A. "A *Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Shaping Fantasies of Elizabethan Culture: Gender, Power, Form." Ferguson, Quilligan, and Vickers 65-87.
- Moore, Lisa. "Transposing Helena to Form and Dignity." Kehler 453-71.
- More, Edward. *A Lytle and bryefe treatyse, called the defence of women, and especially of Englyshe women, made against the Schole howse of women*. London, 1560. *Early English Books Online*. Web. 07 Jan. 2010.
- Newman, Karen. *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama*. Ed. Catharine R. Stimpson. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991. Print. Women in Culture and Society Series.
- Nicholson, Eric A. "Translating the Theatrical Virtuosa from Venice to London." *Translating Female Performance*. Renaissance Society of America Annual

Convention. Archivo di Stato, Venice. 9 Apr. 2010. Address.

Norland, Howard. "Leavening Laughter in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*." *Tudor Theater, for Laughs?: Puzzling Laughter in Plays of the Tudor Age*. New York: Peter Lang, 2002. 261-74. Print.

Norrington, Ruth. *In the Shadow of the Throne: The Lady Arbella Stuart*. London: Peter Owen, 2002. Print.

O'Day, Rosemary. "Tudor and Stuart Women: their Lives through their Letters." Daybell 127-42.

Oh, Elisa. "Refusing to Speak: Silent, Chaste, and Disobedient Female Subjects in *King Lear* and *The Tragedy of Mariam*." *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 34.2 (2008): 185-216. Print.

Orgel, Stephen. *The Authentic Shakespeare and Other Problems of the Early Modern Stage*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.

---. "Nobody's Perfect: Or Why Did the English Stage Take Boys for Women?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88.1 (1989): 7-29. Print.

---. "The Subtexts of *The Roaring Girl*." *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*. Ed. Susan Zimmerman. New York and London: Routledge, 1992. 12-26. Print.

Orlin, Lena Cowen. "Gertrude's Closet." *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 134 (1998): 44-67. Print.

Osborne, Dorothy. *The Letters of Dorothy Osborne to William Temple*. Ed. G. C. Moore Smith. Oxford: Clarendon, 1928. Rpt. 1947. Print.

- Ostman, Heather E. "Backbiters, Flatterers, and Monarchs: Domestic Politics in *The Tragedy of Mariam*." *Images of Matter: Essays on British Literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Newark: Delaware UP, 2005. 183-205. Print.
- Ottway, Sheila. "Autobiography." Pacheco 231-47.
- . "Dorothy Osbourne's Love Letters: Novelistic Glimmerings and the Ovidian Self." *Prose Studies* 19.2 (1996): 149-59. Print.
- The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 2009. *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Web.
- Pacheco, Anita, ed. *A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*. Malden: John Wiley, 2002. Print. Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture Series.
- Parker, Patricia. "Construing Gender: Mastering Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew*." *The Impact of Feminism in English Renaissance Studies*. Ed. Dymphna Callaghan. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007. 193-209. Print.
- Partridge, Edward. B. "Epicene." *The Broken Compass: A Study of the Major Comedies of Ben Jonson*. New York: Columbia UP, 1958. Rpt. in *Ben Jonson: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Jonas A. Barish. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963. 121-32. Print.
- Paston, Katherine. *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603-1627*. Ed. Ruth Hughey. [Norfolk]: Norfolk Record Society, 1941. Print. Norfolk Record Society Vol. 14.
- Peacock, Judith. "Writing for the Brain and Writing for the Boards: The Producibility of Margaret Cavendish's Dramatic Texts." Clucas 87-108.

Petzold, Jochen. "Subverting the Master Discourse?: The Power of Women's Words in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed*." *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 31.2 (2006): 157-70. Print.

Phillippy, Patricia, *Painting Women: Cosmetics, Canvases and Early Modern Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006. Print.

---, ed. *The Writings of an English Sappho*. By Elizabeth Cooke Hoby Russell. Toronto: CRRS/Iter, 2011. Forthcoming.

Pollock, Linda A. "Living on the Stage of the World: The Concept of Privacy among the Elite of Early Modern England." *Rethinking Social History: English Society 1570-1920 and Its Interpretation*. Ed. Adrian Wilson. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993. 78-96. Print.

Poole, Kristen. "'The Fittest Closet for All Goodness': Authorial Strategies of Jacobean Mother's Manuals." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 35.1 (1995): 69-88. *JSTOR*. Web. 12 Nov. 2008.

Purkiss, Diane. "Blood, Sacrifice, Marriage: Why Iphigenia and Mariam Have to Die." *Women's Writing* 6.1 (1999): 27-45. *Informaworld*. 08 Jan. 2010.

Quilligan, Maureen. "Staging Gender: William Shakespeare and Elizabeth Cary." *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images*. Ed. James Grantham Turner. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993. 208-32. Print.

Raber, Karen, ed. *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550-1700*. Volume 6: *Elizabeth Cary*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2009. Print.

---. *Dramatic Difference: Gender, Class, and Genre in the Early Modern Closet Drama*.

Newark: U of Delaware, 2001. Print.

Rackin, Phyllis. "Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the

English Renaissance Stage." *PMLA* 102.1 (1987): 29-41. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 Feb.

2009.

---. *Shakespeare and Women*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Print. Oxford Shakespeare

Topics.

Rampone, William Reginald, Jr. "Women's Negotiation of Power in Early Modern

Ballads, Prose Romances, and Plays." Diss. U of Rhode Island, 1994. *Proquest*.

Web. 17 Oct. 2007.

Ranald, Margaret Loftus. "The Performance of Feminism in *The Taming of the Shrew*."

Theatre Research Journal 19.3 (1994): 214-25. Rpt. in Aspinall 318-30.

Rasmussen, Eric, ed. *The Woman's Prize*. By John Fletcher. Bevington 1215-96.

Ravelhofer, Barbara. "Women on the English Courtly Stage: Queen Henrietta Maria's

Dramatic Activities." *Waltheus and Corporaal* 129-42.

Rebhorn, Wayne A. "Petruchio's 'Rope-Tricks': *The Taming of the Shrew* and the

Renaissance Discourse of Rhetoric." *Modern Philology* 92.3 (1995): 294-327.

MLA International Bibliography. Web. 17 March 2009.

Rich, Mary Boyle, Countess of Warwick. "Some Specialities in the Life of M.

Warwick." *English Women's Voices, 1540-1700*. Ed. Charlotte F. Otten. Miami:

Florida International UP, 1992. 158-67. Print.

Richardson, Elizabeth. *A Ladies Legacy to Her Daughters*. London, 1645. *Early English*

Books Online. Web. 24 Apr. 2008.

Rixon, Penny. "A *Midsummer Night's Dream*." *Shakespeare: Texts and Contexts*. Ed.

Kiernan Ryan. Basingstoke: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's, 2000. 1-30.

Print.

Roberts, Jeanne Addison. "Convents, Conventions, and Contraventions: *Love's Labor's Lost* and *The Convent of Pleasure*." *Shakespeare's Sweet Thunder: Essays on the Early Comedies*. Ed. Michael Collins. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1997. 75-89.

Print.

Roberts, Josephine. "Deciphering Women's Pastoral: Coded Language in Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory*." *Representing Women in Renaissance England*. Eds. Claude J.

Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth. Columbia: U of Missouri, 1997. 163-74.

Print.

---. "The Huntington Manuscript of Lady Mary Wroth's Play, *Loves Victorie*." *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 46.2 (1983): 156-74. *JSTOR*. Web. 30 May 2009.

---, ed. Introduction. *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1983. 3-81. Print.

Roberts, Sasha. "Shakespeare 'creepes into the womens closets about bedtime': Women Reading in a Room of Their Own." *Renaissance Configurations:*

Voices/Bodies/Space, 1580-1690. Ed. Gordon McMullan. New York: St.

Martin's, 1998. 30-63. Print.

Rose, Mary Beth. *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama*. Ithaca: Cornell, 1988. Print.

Ross, Gordon N. "Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*." *Explicator* 46.3 (1998): 7-9.

Print.

Rowse, A. L. "Bisham and the Hobys." *Times, Persons, Places, Essays in Literature*.

London: MacMillan, 1965. 188-218. Print.

Russell, Elizabeth Cooke Hoby. *The Letters of Lady Elizabeth Russell (1540-1609)*. Ed.

Elizabeth Farber. Diss. Columbia U, 1977. *Proquest*. Web. 5 Nov. 2008.

---. *The Writings of an English Sappho*. Ed. Patricia Phillippy. Toronto: CRRS/Iter,

2011. Forthcoming.

Sanders, Julie. "'The Closet Opened': A Reconstruction of 'Private' Space in the

Writings of Margaret Cavendish." *Clucas* 127-40.

---. "'Twill fit the players yet': Women and Theatre in Jonson's Late Plays." *Cave*,

Schafer, and Woolland 179-90.

---. "'A Woman Write a Play!': Jonsonian Strategies and the Dramatic Writings of

Margaret Cavendish; or, Did the Duchess Feel the Anxiety of Influence?"

Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, *Readings* 293-305.

Schneider, Gary. "Affecting Correspondences: Body, Behavior, and the Textualization

of Emotion in Early Modern English Letters." *Prose Studies* 23.3 (2000): 31-62.

Informaworld. Web. 8 Dec. 2008.

Seelig, Sharon Cadman. *Autobiography and Gender in Early Modern Literature:*

Reading Women's Lives, 1600-1680. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2006.

Print.

Shakespeare, William. *Henry V*. Greenblatt 1471-1548.

---. *King Lear*. Greenblatt 2325-2567.

---. *Measure for Measure*. Greenblatt 2039-2108.

---. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Greenblatt 839-96.

---. *The Rape of Lucrece*. Greenblatt 663-710.

---. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Greenblatt 159-228.

Shannon, Laurie J. "The Tragedie of Mariam: Cary's Critique of the Terms of Founding Social Discourses." *English Literary Renaissance* 24.1 (1994): 135-53. Print.

Shapiro, Michael. "Framing the Taming: Metatheatrical Awareness of Female Impersonation in *The Taming of the Shrew*." *The Yearbook of English Studies* 23 (1993): 143-66. Rpt. in Aspinall 210-35.

---. "Lady Mary Wroth Describes a 'Boy Actress.'" *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 4 (1989): 187-94. Print.

Shaver, Anne. "Agency and Marriage in the Fictions of Lady Mary Wroth and Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle." *Pilgrimage for Love: Essays in Early Modern Literature in Honor of Josephine A. Roberts*. Ed. Sigrid King. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999. 177-90. Print.

Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 213.

Shaver, Anne, ed. *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1999. Print.

Siegfried, Brandie R. "Dining at the Table of Sense: Shakespeare, Cavendish, and *The Convent of Pleasure*." *Cavendish and Shakespeare: Interconnections*. Eds. Katherine Romack and James Fitzmaurice. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. 63-83.

Print.

- Skura, Meredith. "The Reproduction of Mothering in *Mariam, Queen of Jewry*: A Defense of 'Biographical' Criticism." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 16 (1997): 27-56. Rpt. in Raber, *Ashgate Critical Essays* 56-86.
- Sloan, LaRue Love. "'Caparisoned like the horse': Tongue and Tail in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 10.2 (2004): n. pag. Web. 3 Feb. 2009.
- Smallwood, R. L., and Stanley Wells, ed. *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. By Thomas Dekker. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999. Print. The Revels Plays.
- Smarr, Janet Levarie. "The Uses of Conversation: Moderata Fonte and Edmund Tilney." *Comparative Literature Studies* 12.1 (1995): 1-25. Print.
- Smith, Amy L. "Performing Marriage in Early Modern England: Wooing and Wedding in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, and *Titus Andronicus*." Diss. U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2000.
- Smith, Emily. "The Local Popularity of *The Concealed Fansyes*." *Notes and Queries* 53.2 (2006): 189-93. *Proquest*. Web. 22 Feb. 2010.
- Smith, G. C. Moore, ed. Introduction. *The Letters of Dorothy Osborne to William Temple*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1928. Rpt. 1947. ix-li. Print.
- Snyder, Susan. "*All's Well that Ends Well* and Shakespeare's Helens: Text and Subtext, Subject and Object." *English Literary Renaissance* 18.1 (1988): 66-77. Print.
- Spivack, Carla. "Dismembering Eliza: The Backlash against Female Rule in Early Jacobean England." Diss. Boston College, 2007. *Proquest*. 20 Nov. 2009.

Starr, Nathan Comfort. "The Concealed Fansyes: A Play by Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley." *PMLA* 46.3 (1931): 802-38. *JSTOR*. Web. 22 Feb.

2010.

Steele, Mary Susan. *Plays and Masques at Court During the Reigns of Elizabeth, James and Charles*. 1926. New York: Russell & Russell, 1968. Print. *Cornell Studies in English* 20.

Steen, Sara Jayne. "Behind the Arras: Editing Renaissance Women's Letters." *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts: Papers of the Renaissance English Text Society, 1985-1991*. Ed. W. Speed Hill. Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1993. 229-38. Print.

---. "The Crime of Marriage: Arbella Stuart and *The Duchess of Malfi*." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22.1 (1991): 61-76. *JSTOR*. 23 June 2009.

---. "Fashioning an Acceptable Self: Arbella Stuart." *English Literary Renaissance* 18.1 (1988): 78-95. Print.

---. "'How Subject to Interpretation': Lady Arbella Stuart and the Reading of Illness." *Daybell* 109-26.

---, ed. *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*. New York: Oxford UP, 1994. 1-115. Print. *Women Writers in English: 1350-1850*.

Stewart, Alan. "The Voices of Anne Cooke, Lady Anne and Lady Bacon." *This Double Voice: Gendered Writing in Early Modern England*. Eds. Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke. New York: St. Martin's, 2000. 88-102. Print.

Stewart, Alan and Heather Wolfe. *Letterwriting in Renaissance England*. Washington,

- D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2004. Print.
- Straznicky, Marta. "'Profane Stoical Paradoxes': *The Tragedie of Mariam* and Sidnean Closet Drama." *English Literary Renaissance* 24.1 (1994): 104-34. Print.
- Stuart, Arbella, Lady. *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*. Ed. Sara Jayne Steen. New York: Oxford UP, 1994. Print. Women Writers in English: 1350-1850.
- Summers, Claude J. "Jonson and His Era: Overviews of Modern Research: *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman*." *Ben Jonson Journal: Literary Contexts in the Age of Elizabeth, James, and Charles* 14.2 (2007): 233-55. Print.
- Swift, Carolyn Ruth. "Feminine Self-Definition in Lady Mary Wroth's *Love's Victorie* (c. 1621)." *English Literary Renaissance* 19.2 (1989): 171-88.
- The Taming of the Shrew*. Dir. Franco Zeffirelli. Perf. Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Columbia, 1967. Film.
- [Thomas, Edgar]. *The Lavves Resolvitions of Women's Rights: Or, The Lavves Provision for Woemen*. London, 1631. *Early English Books Online*. Web. 14 Apr. 2010.
- Thornton, Alice. *The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newton, Co. York*. Ed. Charles Jackson. Durham: Andrews, 1873. Print. Surtees Society Vol. 62.
- Thynne, Joan and Maria. *Two Elizabethan Women: Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1675-1611*. Ed. Alison Wall. Stoke-on-Trent: Devizes, 1983. Print. Wiltshire Record Society Vol. 38.
- Tiffany, Grace. "Jonson, Satire, and the Empty Hermaphrodite." *Erotic Beasts and Social Monsters: Shakespeare, Jonson, and Comic Androgyny*. Newark: U of Delaware P; London: Associated UPs, 1995. 105-35. Print.

- Tilney, Edmund. *A briefe and pleasant discourse of duties in Mariage, called the Flower of Friendshippe*. London, 1568. *Early English Books Online*. Web. 4 Nov. 2005.
- Tomlinson, Sophie. "'My Brain the Stage': Margaret Cavendish and the Fantasy of Female Performance." Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, *Readings* 272-92.
- Trapnel, Anna. *Anna Trapnel's Report and Plea*. 1654. Rpt. in Graham et al. 75-86.
- Traub, Valerie. "The (In)Significance of 'Lesbian' Desire in Early Modern England." *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*. Ed. Susan Zimmerman. New York: Routledge, 1992. 150-69. Print.
- . *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print. Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture.
- Travitsky, Betty S. "Down-Home Bacon, or, A Seventeenth-Century Woman's 'Considerations concerning Marriage.'" *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews* 5.2-3 (1992): 134-37. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 17 Feb. 2010.
- . "Egerton, Elizabeth." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Eds. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. 60 vols. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004. Print.
- . "The Feme Covert in Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam*." *Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Eds. Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1987. 184-96. Print.
- . *Subordination and Authorship in Early Modern England: The Case of Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton and Her "Loose Papers."* Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999. Print. Medieval and Renaissance Texts

and Studies 208.

Trill, Suzanne. "Religion and the Construction of Femininity." *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*. Ed. Helen Wilcox. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 30-55. Print.

Underdown, D. E. "The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England." *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*. Ed. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985. 116-36. Print.

Wall, Alison. "Deference and Defiance in Women's Letters of the Thynne Family: the Rhetoric of Relationships." *Daybell* 77-93.

---, ed. Introduction. *Two Elizabethan Women: Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1675-1611*. Stoke-on-Trent: Devizes, 1983. Print. Wiltshire Record Society Vol. 38.

Waller, Gary. "'Like One in a Gay Masque': The Sidney Cousins in the Theaters of Court and Country." *The Sidney Family Romance: Mary Wroth, William Herbert, and the Early Modern Construction of Gender*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1993. 231-45. Rpt. in Cerasano and Davies, *Readings* 234-45.

Walsh, Brian. "Performing Historicity in Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 46.2 (2006): 323-48. Print.

Walthaus, Rina and Marguérite Corporaal, eds. *Heroines of the Golden StAge: Women and Drama in Spain and England, 1500-1700*. Kassel: Reichenberger, 2008. Print.

- Warnicke, Retha. "Private and Public: The Boundaries of Women's Lives in Early Stuart England." *Privileging Gender in Early Modern England*. Ed. Jean R. Brink. Kirkville: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1993. 123-40. Print.
- Warren, Robin O. "A Partial Liberty: Gender and Class in Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley's *The Concealed Fancies*." *Renaissance Papers* (2000): 155-67. Print.
- Watson, Robert N. "*Epicoene*: From Satire to Farce to Improvisational Comedy." *Ben Jonson's Parodic Strategy: Literary Imperialism in the Comedies*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987. 98-112. Print.
- Wayne, Valerie. "Refashioning the Shrew." *Shakespeare Studies* 17 (1985): 159-87. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 17 March 2009.
- . "The Sexual Politics of Textual Transmission." *Textual Formations and Reformations*. Eds. Laurie E. Maguire and Thomas L. Berger. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1998. 179-210. Print.
- , ed. *The Flower of Friendship: A Renaissance Dialogue Contesting Marriage*. By Edmund Tilney. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992. Print.
- Webster, John. *The Duchess of Malfi*. Bevington 1755-1832.
- Webster, Tom. "Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journals and Early Modern Spirituality." *The Historical Journal* 39.1 (1996): 33-56. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 Dec. 2008.
- Weller, Barry and Margaret W. Ferguson, eds. *The Tragedy of Mariam, The Fair Queen of Jewry with The Lady Falkland: Her Life by One of Her Daughters*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1994. Print.

Whately, William. *A Bride-Bvsh, Or, a Direction for Married Persons*. London, 1619.

Early English Books Online. Web. 21 May 2009.

Whigham, Frank. "Sexual and Social Mobility in *The Duchess of Malfi*." *PMLA* 100.2 (1985): 167-81. Rpt. in Callaghan 167-200.

Whitaker, Katie. *Mad Madge: The Extraordinary Life of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, the First Woman to Live by Her Pen*. New York: Basic, 2002. Print.

Whitney, Isabella. "To the worshipfull and right vertuous yong Gentyلمان, George Mainwaring Esquier." *A Sweet Nosgay*. 1567. Rpt. in *Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney and Aemilia Lanyer: Renaissance Women Poets*. Ed. Danielle Clark. London: Penguin, 2000. 3-4. Print.

Wilcox, Helen. "Her Own Life, Her Own Living? Text and Materiality in Seventeenth-century Englishwomen's Autobiographical Writings." *Betraying Our Selves: Forms of Self-Representation in Early Modern English Texts*. Eds. Henk Dragstra, Sheila Ottway, and Helen Wilcox. New York: St. Martin's, 2000. 105-19. Print.

---. "Private Writing and Public Function: Autobiographical Texts by Renaissance Englishwomen." *Gloriana's Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance*. Eds. S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1992. 47-62.

Willen, Diane. "Religion and the Construction of the Feminine." Pacheco 22-39.

Williams, Gweno. "'Why May Not a Lady Write a Good Play?': Plays by Early Modern

- Women Reassessed as Performance Texts.” Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 95-107.
- Wilson, Miranda. “Building a Perfect Silence: The Use of Renaissance Architecture in Margaret Cavendish’s *Bell in Campo*.” *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* 10 (2004): 245-64. Print.
- Wiseman, Sue. “Gender and Status in Dramatic Discourse: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle.” *Women, Writing, and History: 1640-1799*. Ed. Isobel Grundy. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992. 159-77. Print.
- Wolfe, Heather. “A Family Affair: The Life and Letters of Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland.” *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts* III. Ed. W. Speed Hill. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2004. 97-108. Rpt. in Raber, *Ashgate Critical Essays* 88-98.
- , ed. *Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland: Life and Letters*. Gen. Ed. Jeremy Maule and Marie Axton. Cambridge: RTM; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001. 1-100. Print. Renaissance Texts from Manuscript 4.
- Woodbridge, Linda. *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1986. Print.
- Woolland, Brian. “The Gift of Silence.” Cave, Schafer, and Woolland 127-42.
- Wroth, Lady Mary. *Love’s Victory*. Cerasano and Wynne-Davies *Renaissance Drama* 91-126.
- Wynne-Davies, Marion. “‘Here is a sport will well befit this time and place’: Allusion and Delusion in Mary Wroth’s *Love’s Victory*.” *Women’s Writing* 6.1 (1999): 47-

64. *Informaworld*. Web. 29 May 2009.

---. "'My Seeled Chamber and Dark Parlour Room': The English Country-House and Renaissance Women Dramatists." Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, *Readings* 60-68.

---. *Women Writers and Familial Discourse in the English Renaissance: Relative Values*. London: Palgrave, 2007. Print.

Young, David. P. *Something of Great Constancy: The Art of A Midsummer Night's Dream*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1966. Print.

Ziegler, Georgianna. "My Lady's Chamber: Female Space, Female Chastity in Shakespeare." *Textual Practice* 4.1 (1990): 73-90.

VITA

Beverly Marshall Van Note received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English from The University of Texas at San Antonio in 1981 and her Master of Arts degree in English from Abilene Christian University in August 1991. She entered the doctoral program at Texas A&M University in August 2004, where she pursued a concentration in Renaissance and Early Modern Studies as well as Women's Studies certification. Her research interests include early modern drama, early modern women writers, and gender theory.

Dr. Van Note may be reached at St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress Ave., Austin, TX 78704. Her email address is beverlyv@stedwards.edu.